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With just two qualifiers remaining, Brian Kerr's men are tantalisingly close to securing a dream ticket to the Euro 2004 finals.
FAI
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Lansdowne Road, Dublin - August 19th 2003, k.o. 7.30pm
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Greetings to our friends from down under.

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Australian visitors to provide stern test ahead of key battles

Fearaim fáilte ó chroí roimh peileadóirí na hAstráile, gó mór mór agus iad ar a gcéad turas chun an tíre seo. Go mbainimid araon tairbhe agus spórt as an ócáid.

It's a considerable pleasure to welcome the footballers of Australia to Dublin for the first ever meeting of our two countries in soccer. I hope that the occasion will be mutually beneficial and that it will sow seeds of lasting friendship for the future.

The beginning of a new international season quickens the sporting pulse, particularly when an alluring prize is on offer at year's end. Two games stand between us and our hopes of reaching the finals of Euro 2004: our match this evening is a token of our intent of being a participant in those finals.

Australia will present us with a very formidable test. The combative Socceroos have been threatening for some time to emulate the prowess of their rugby and cricket counterparts, and their three-one dismantling of England at Upton Park was no real surprise to those who have been keeping an eye on their progress. The geographical isolation from the world's strongest footballing nations has been an inhibiting factor which they are strenuously trying to overcome, along with some other notable difficulties.

Two games stand between us and our hopes of reaching the finals of Euro 2004: our match this evening is a token of our intent of being a participant in those finals

This will be one of those games where the result is likely to be of less importance than the performance. At the same time, it is not in the nature of either side to be indifferent about the score at the end of the game. Brian Kerr's team, in particular, will be anxious to build on the mounting confidence gained from its haul of ten precious points from the twelve on offer over their past four games.

Those ten points, coupled with some favourable results elsewhere, have rescued Irish hopes after an unexpectedly dismal start to the campaign. Now a hugely important game against Russia next month could pave the way for a tingling crunch-tie away to Switzerland in the final qualifying game in October. The old buzz is back, and everybody is happy.

Well, not altogether happy. Twice in the past year the Irish fans' reputation for exemplary sportsmanship was diminished by the booing indulged in by some. An Irish manager, probably our most successful ever, bore the brunt of the first attack, whilst a Georgian player was persistently heckled in the second. Apart from being unsporting and undignified, the booing of a player simply because of his club affiliation is also downright silly. Let's cut it out.

On the credit side, however, the active and voluble support provided by eircom League fans at our last game here provided a valuable "lift" to the whole team. The players acknowledge that they love to come to Lansdowne Road: the non-stop support of the real fans will embellish the pleasure even more.

Irish soccer, domestically and internationally, is making excellent progress. To say that "we're getting there" is no idle cliché, but, like any organisation, we need the encouragement of all football supporters. After a rocky few games, fortress Lansdowne is beginning to live up to its reputation.

The boys from Oz will be more anxious than most to dent our hopes. It should lead to a fascinating game. I hope you all enjoy it.

Milo Corcoran
President, Football Association of Ireland

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Spirit and confidence growing with every game

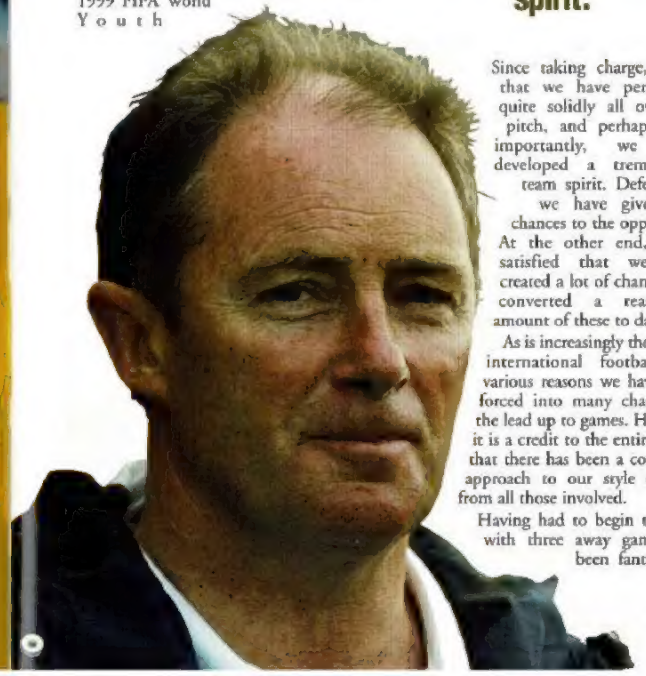
GOOD evening and welcome to what promises to be another challenging test for our senior international team at Lansdowne Road.

Tonight's opponents, the Australian 'Socceroos', have made great strides on the international stage in recent years, with many players plying their trade in the Premiership and indeed right across Europe. Needless to say, the current squad boasts two of the biggest names in the Premiership at present in Liverpool's Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka of Leeds United. It is always a pleasure to have such talented players come to Lansdowne Road and I must say that, given the talent within the current Australian national squad, it came as no surprise to me that they defeated England so comprehensively some months ago.

Surprisingly, we have never played against Australia at senior international level. In the only international fixture between the two countries, a Damien Duff led Ireland under-20 team defeated the 'Qantas Young Socceroos' 4-0 in a 1999 FIFA World Youth Championship match.

It is great to be back in action following a brief summer break, which was particularly satisfying after leaving on a high note with our back-to-back wins over Georgia and Albania in June. The players' application and commitment was top class during May and June. This allowed us to achieve the results that we so desperately needed.

Since taking charge, I feel that we have performed quite solidly all over the pitch, and perhaps most importantly, we have developed a tremendous team spirit.



Since taking charge, I feel that we have performed quite solidly all over the pitch, and perhaps most importantly, we have developed a tremendous team spirit. Defensively, we have given few chances to the opposition. At the other end, I am satisfied that we have created a lot of chances and converted a reasonable amount of these to date.

As is increasingly the case in international football, for various reasons we have been forced into many changes in the lead up to games. However, it is a credit to the entire squad that there has been a consistent approach to our style of play from all those involved.

Having had to begin the year with three away games, it's been fantastic to have had such a run of games here at Lansdowne Road over the past few months. This has been particularly satisfying as in recent games the support for the team has been more passionate and colourful than ever before. The players and staff were delighted by the fantastic reception we received, particularly in our last two home qualifying games. The effect that this support has on the team is tremendous and I would urge you, the supporters, to continue this spirited approach long into the future.

This evening's game will be a chance to build on our teamwork and teamplay against a team that boasts talent all over the pitch and who will be coming here looking for a win. It is vital that we continue our recent run of form ahead of our final group 10 game away to Switzerland on October 11th.

Lastly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for all of the kind words and support that I have received since taking charge of the senior international team. It has been a humbling experience.

However, I feel that the past eight months have posed a challenge that both the management team and the players have faced head on. We shall continue the determination and commitment displayed throughout this campaign and I am confident that you, the supporters, will continue to give us the immense support that can give the players that extra lift when it is needed.

Enjoy the match!

Brian Kerr
Irish Senior International Team Manager

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This reputation is in danger of being tarnished by the behaviour of some people at our recent games.

The increased incidences of players from certain clubs, especially Glasgow Rangers, being targeted for verbal abuse is unacceptable.

While some individuals consider this practice to be jocular and acceptable the simple fact of the matter is that many people find this behaviour insulting and very upsetting.

I have received a significant amount of correspondence from people who attended recent games who view the behaviour as discriminatory, sectarian and racist.

To date, this has manifested itself as a very specific strain of discrimination – one that infers that any international player who is a current or past member of Glasgow Rangers is fair game for sustained booing and foul-mouthed abuse.

The FAI condemns the hostile abuse of individual players or teams based on race, creed, colour or other affiliations

Brian Kerr has come out publicly to express his disgust at this type of behaviour and calls on the fans to treat all opposing players equally. From speaking to the players, I know that they are deeply embarrassed when they see a fellow-professional subjected to this treatment - purely on the basis of what club he plays for.

This is also becoming a serious disciplinary issue for the Football Association of Ireland with UEFA. Following the game against Georgia on June 11th, a formal complaint was lodged with UEFA, specifically relating to the treatment of Shota Arveladze who was incessantly booed by a large section of Irish fans. UEFA investigated the incidents with a view to taking disciplinary action.

Their subsequent decision not to take disciplinary action against the FAI was due, in no small part, to the fact that the Association came out strongly against this behaviour in the immediate aftermath of the game and made it clear that they did not condone it in any shape or form.

I personally made contact with Shota Arveladze to apologise on behalf of the Association – and on behalf of the vast majority of Irish fans who abhor this behaviour.

We cannot presume, however, that UEFA will take such a benign view should this conduct continue. As we face into the defining games of the current European qualifying series, we simply cannot afford to have the Association – and the team – penalised in a way, which will compromise possible qualification for Portugal in 2004.

But this is not the main reason why we should stop this nonsense immediately. The real reason is that it is wrong. It is based on the worst sort of senseless bigotry and is deeply offensive to the player involved. It also embarrasses our own manager and players and is downright insulting to the vast majority of true sports fans on this island.

Tonight is a wonderful opportunity to put things right. Not simply to stop the booing, but to go out of our way to extend a warm and friendly welcome to ALL our visitors.

If you consider yourself to be a sports fan, it is no less than your duty.

I am asking for the support of you all to stop this practice immediately.

Fran Rooney

Chief Executive Officer,
Football Association of Ireland

Oz outing an opportunity for fine tuning

Despite the awkward timing of Australia's visit, Brian Kerr will use today's fixture as preparation for the crucial games against the Russians and Swiss.

Paul Lennon
Irish Daily Star

BRIAN Kerr freely admits that playing a senior international friendly in the middle of August is spiked with potential problems given that all of his players have just returned to league action with their clubs.

But as Ireland take on Australia for the first time ever at this level at Lansdowne Road this evening, the national team coach also knows that this 90 minutes still remains an invaluable opportunity to prepare for the forthcoming key Euro 2004 qualifiers with Russia and Switzerland.

He may have lost a few members of his original 23 strong squad through weekend injuries and there's no doubt that club commitments will force him into selection compromises to some extent tonight. However, Kerr is correct to believe that the game offers a far greater number of pluses than minuses.

This philosophy served his immediate predecessors well with friendlies used to blood newcomers, test tactical alternatives and, equally significantly, to aid bonding between players who may only see each other half a dozen times per season.

This latter aspect of football is something that Kerr turned into a fine art during his six years in charge of the nation's under age teams. And, like Mick McCarthy, Jack Charlton and Eoin Hand before him, the 50 year-old is keenly aware that the willingness to sweat every last drop of blood for the cause will count for much in Dublin on September 6 and Basel on October 11.

To date, Kerr's teams have not lacked that battling quality, but against the Russians and Swiss they will require an even larger quota of sheer guts and determination to claim the four points that will guarantee a November play-off or the two wins that assure automatic qualification to Portugal next summer.

So the chance to impart a few further days on wisdom on the training ground and in a match setting will do Ireland's hopes no harm at all. For Kerr 'doesn't do friendlies'.

On the pitch, 10 points from a maximum 12 under Kerr leaves the country close to ending a 16 year wait to follow up the country's inaugural European Championships qualification at Euro 88.

However, those three wins and one draw were secured against the two nations that will eventually prop up Group Ten. It's important that this aspect of the turnaround in the team's fortunes is not overlooked.

Since the back to back victories over Albania and Georgia were secured in Dublin last June, there has been an understandable build-up of expectation and hype about the team's prospects in the months ahead. Optimism is always healthier than its opposite but without pragmatism is usually completely useless.

The Swiss know that four points from their two remaining games will guarantee them top place in the group while the Russians will arrive in Dublin with the intention of playing for a draw before then seeking to claim the six home points against Switzerland and Georgia that will earn them at least the runners-up spot.

Hence, the notion that gaining four or six points from the next two matches will be something of a cake-walk should be instantly dismissed. For our two opponents are also playing for their qualification lives which adds an extra edge to the remaining games.

And it should be noted that Ireland have failed to win either of their competitive games away to the Swiss to date even if the USSR were despatched 3-0 and 1-0 in Dublin in 1974 and 1984 respectively.

And while neither of our chief rivals for the top two places would be regarded as figuring in Europe's elite it should not be forgotten that both teams deserved to beat Ireland last autumn. So the next two group outings should be treated in the same manner that recent qualifying clashes with Holland and Portugal were approached.

Kerr will undoubtedly underline that fact in the weeks ahead to counter genuine support for his side that runs out of control and adheres to the de facto notion that bookings for the Algarve should be completed now, regardless of the facts.

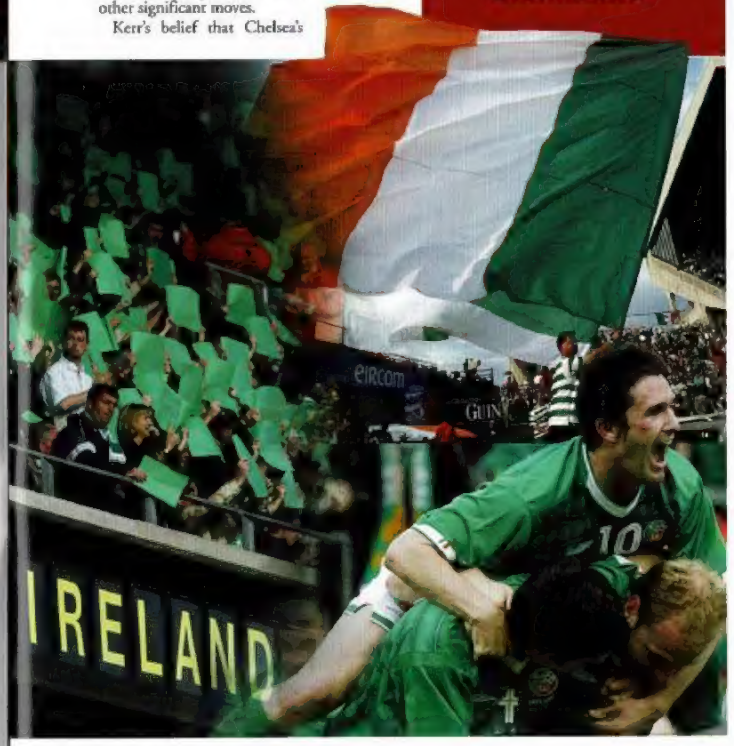
There are plenty of reasons to believe that Kenny Cunningham's men can reach the final 16 but lopsided uncritical support won't to the job. In reality, the team will be asked to make a momentous effort if they are to reach the finals either by winning the group or via November's two-legged play-off.

The summer ushered in its gaggle of transfers involving Irish players with all deals undoubtedly aiding their own personal ambitions and that of Ireland. Damien Duff's €24m move from Blackburn Rovers to Chelsea naturally hogged the greatest column inches although there were other significant moves.

Kerr's belief that Chelsea's demands in the Premiership and Champions League may affect Duff's availability is worth noting but it won't detract from the overall value of the Dubliner's new environment that will see him pitch his talents against the best in Europe on a regular basis while also benefiting from the presence of his new team mates.

Kerr regards Gary Breen as Cunningham's natural central defensive partner so the 56 times capped 29 year old's move from West Ham to Sunderland is good news for the boss. Black Cats' manager McCarthy is a massive fan of Breen so his starting place in the side is guaranteed, barring injury or a prolonged loss of form.

'The notion that gaining four or six points from the next two matches will be something of a cake walk should be instantly dismissed'



Breen continued to produce the required level of displays in the green shirt despite his Upton Park nightmare so it can be assumed with a degree of certainty that he should continue in this vein of form in the coming months now that he is playing regular club football.

Likewise, Colin Healy's exit from Celtic should also aid his development following the most frustrating nine months imaginable at Parkhead. The Corkman is on the verge of claiming an automatic place in Kerr's midfield after his impressive display in last June's 2-0 victory over Georgia so he needs to hold regular first team football

Steven Reid's move from Millwall to Blackburn Rovers is another timely switch with the versatile right winger now primed to deliver at the highest level. At 22 and with Jason McAteer currently out of the frame, Reid will be a critical member of the Irish team in the months and years ahead.

Matt Holland – somewhat unfortunate not to be handed the captain's armband in the wake of Roy Keane and Steve Staunton's retirements – has also benefited from the summer sales with Ipswich Town's financial constraints ensuring his EURO 850,000 move to Charlton Athletic.

Another season at Portman Road – where he frequently operated as a centre half last season – would not have aided Holland's bid to assume the role of Kerr's midfield general. At the Valley, he will surely thrive beside the up and coming Stuart Parker.

David Connolly also moved due to his club's cash problems and was happy to hitch his wagon to Glenn Roeder's promotion chasing West Ham. With 24 league goals in 28 games for Wimbledon last season it's fairly safe to predict that Connolly will deliver an impressive goals per game ratio again this season.

Roeder chose Jermaine Defoe and the on-loan Liverpool striker Neil Mellor for the Hammers' opening First Division game with Preston but needed substitute Connolly to claim the winning goal. Roeder will take note.

Kerr's second choice keeper Nicky Colgan has also moved following Hibernian boss Bobby Williamson's inexplicable decision to dump the 29 year-old from his first team plans. Colgan has joined Stockport County on loan until the mid-season transfer window and will benefit there rather than sitting in the Easter Road reserves.

So Kerr and Ireland have much to be pleased about as they serve up a tasty aperitif against Australia this evening. But it's the testing main course in the months ahead that will be the true measure on the current feel good factor.

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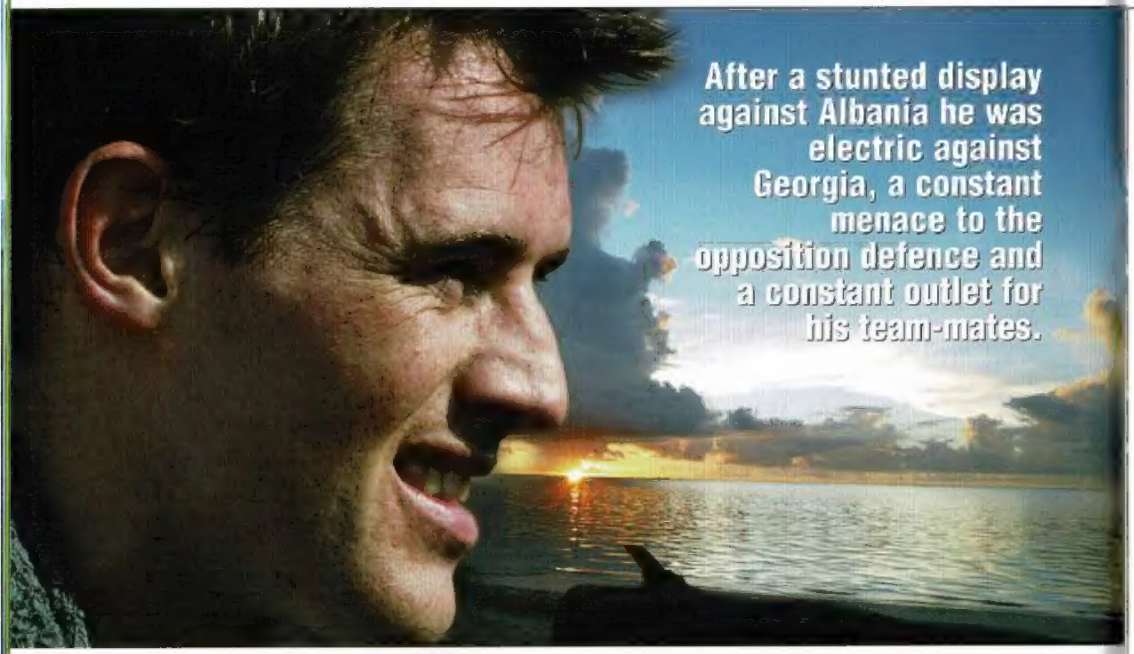
Kevin Kilbane is something of an enigma. Just when you've written him off he comes back stronger than ever. Now Ireland's winger is hitting a rich vein of form under Brian Kerr.



INTERESTING to see which Kevin Kilbane turns up for duty at Lansowne Road tonight.

Will we get the player who played with dynamism and intelligence in June's 2-0 defeat of Georgia in the Euro 2004 qualifiers?

Will we witness another solid performance in midfield reminiscent of his displays for an ailing Sunderland last season?

Or will it be a return to the frustrating Kilbane, the one who occasionally appears out of his depth at senior international level?

Bit of an enigma, indeed. Just when you've written him off he comes back stronger than ever. Kevin is a player who revels in confounding his critics.

For those who have the 26-year-old pigeon-holed as a one dimensional player, Kilbane has proved to be a difficult subject.

By the time you read this, he could already have made the trip across the Pennines to don an Everton jersey at a photocall, confirming his new status as the Toffees' latest recruit.

Or, which seems more likely at the time of writing, he could be recovering from Sunderland's second First Division game of the season against Millwall.

But the matter remains unresolved. Throughout the summer it appeared that Kilbane was on his way out of the Stadium of Light. New Sunderland manager Mick McCarthy, the man who had handed the

Michael Scully
Irish Mirror

winger his debut at senior international level, was resigned to losing several of his most high profile players.

While Kevin Phillips and Claudio Reyna topped that list, Kilbane was near the summit after a season he could be proud of as Sunderland toppled ungracefully from their Premiership perch.

That's the kind of statement that makes him an odd 'un. It's not all that long since Kilbane was at war with Black Cats supporters - or rather they were at war with him.

"I had a good chat with Mick and he's made it clear we are all open to offers from other clubs, but as far as I am concerned I am a Sunderland player and committed to getting us promoted. We owe that to the fans and to Mick McCarthy," he recently admitted.

"As a team we let everyone down last season and we did not give Mick what he deserved as manager in the nine Premiership games he was in charge for. He is a great manager - I know that more than anyone - but now the Sunderland players must to prove it and prove themselves to him".

Loyalty is one of Kilbane's strongest traits, but he's a very courageous player too. Make no mistake, things had turned sour for the left-footer at club level but he managed to turn things around, as he has done at various stages of his career.

He became West Brom's first £1million signing in 1997 when he left his home-town club Preston for the Hawthorns with only around 50 appearances under his belt.

The instant impact he made at Preston was replicated at West Brom and it wasn't long before he had caught McCarthy's attention.

The then Irish manager threw him into the white-heat of a World Cup qualifier against Iceland in Reykjavik that same year and the bold move backfired badly on Kilbane. He wasn't prepared for the step up in class and it was no surprise that he was replaced by Mark Kennedy at the break

Kennedy went on to score twice that day before he was sent-off but it has been the steadier Kilbane who prospered under McCarthy to the extent that he has now amassed 46 caps.

Nevertheless for a while he must have wondered if the chance would come again. It took 18 months for McCarthy to try him out again when he made a substitute appearance against Sweden at Lansdowne.

The experiment worked as Kilbane caused a lot of problems and he became a fixture in the side until the emergence of Damien Duff during the 2002 World Cup qualifiers. Even then Kilbane saw plenty of action as Duff was used as an attacking option more often than not by McCarthy.

To his credit, Kilbane has never disguised the difference in ability between himself and Duff. "In a few years Damien will be up there with the world's best," Kilbane predicted confidently last year.

And, on many occasions over the past couple of years, Kilbane emphasised that he had no problem with Duff playing in his place. The son of Irish parents, he was an Ireland supporter first and foremost, he told his questioners. That meant wanting the best players to play for their country even if it was at his cost.

It's the kind of honesty that has endeared him to supporters at Lansdowne Road. No one sees Kilbane in the same light as Duff, there's no doubt that there's quite a leap between them in terms of ability.

Duff can beat players at will and does things few international stars can do. It makes him a special talent. Kilbane, who prefers to take possession and set off in a straight line down the flank, is the first to acknowledge this.

Just as he was establishing himself at international level, so an inevitable move to the Premiership beckoned. He was linked to a number of big clubs but it was ambitious Sunderland who took the plunge when Peter Reid signed him up for a hefty enough fee - £2.2million - in December 1999.

Until last season, though, his dream move had become a nightmare. It went wrong from the beginning, with a loss of form and some niggling injuries eroding his confidence. His best run in the team was 14 games from January 2000 to the end of April in the months after he moved to the Wearsiders.

It wasn't long before he was being barracked by the Sunderland supporters.

Reid had made a number of bad decisions when it came to buying players and Kilbane was made a scapegoat.

At one point Reid decided that it would be better to leave the player out altogether rather than force him to deal with the insults from the stands.

Things appeared to have come to a head last summer on the club's pre-season tour when Kilbane suffered the ignominy of a beer soaking by disgruntled fans.

He was on the way out; but that's not Kilbane's style and strangely it was Howard Wilkinson who re-invented him as a combative central midfielder last season and as a Sunderland player. Last season, ironically, he was one of the few players the fans did warm to.

Under new Ireland manager Brian Kerr, Kilbane's performances have become less erratic. He scored the first goal of the new regime at Hampden Park in February when he ghosted in at the near post to head past Scotland goalkeeper Neil O'Sullivan, expertly finishing a well-rehearsed set-piece move.

There are still creases to be ironed out. Within a week in June we saw Kilbane as a Jeckyll and Hyde. After a stunted display against Albania he was electric against Georgia, a constant menace to the opposition defence and a constant outlet for his team-mates.

"No one is getting away from us and qualifying is in our hands," he remarked recently. "I don't like looking too far ahead to next season's games, but I feel we can achieve anything now, and that includes finishing top".

If Kilbane can reach the heights again, he'll play a big role in Ireland achieving what appeared to be an impossible dream just over a year ago.

factfile

- Made his Preston NE debut at Torquay in a 4 v 0 win
- Played 11 games for his home town side Preston in his debut league season as they won the 3rd division championship in 1995
- West Bromwich Albion's then record signing when he joined them for £1.25m
- Kilbane was born in England, his parents were born in Ireland
- Republic's Under 21 Player Of The Year in 1998
- Made Republic Of Ireland debut v Iceland in September 1998 as a half time substitute for Mark Kennedy
- SAFC international debut v Czech Republic in Dublin 23 February 2000
- Made SAFC debut v Southampton at The Stadium Of Light 18 December 1999 as a substitute
- Best run in SAFC side is 14 consecutive games from 23 January 2000 to 29 April 2000
- Made 10 appearances for the Republic Of Ireland in the 2002 World Cup Qualifiers scoring 2 goals

Turkey visit to finalise Irish preparations

TURKISH DELIGHT: Tony Cascarino (above) is mobbed by team mates, Terry Phelan and Ray Houghton after scoring against Turkey in 1991, and Cascarino again (left) involved in the thick of things squaring up to Turkey's Ali Eren Beserler in 1999.

THE Republic of Ireland will play a friendly international against Turkey at Lansdowne Road on Tuesday, September 9, in what will be Ireland's final preparation game for the crucial Euro 2004 qualifier with Switzerland on October 11.

Ireland face Russia in the penultimate qualifier on September 6, three days before the clash with Turkey, and if a favourable result is acquired, Ireland will go into the final game with Switzerland in Basel knowing that a good result would see them Group Ten and qualify automatically for next year's European Championships.

The Turkish game takes place on Tuesday, 24 hours before the Russia versus Switzerland tie on September 10 which is an important match for Irish qualification hopes.

Turkey will prove difficult opponents. They finished third in last year's World Cup finals in Japan and Korea and have looked strong in qualification for the European Championships where they currently top Group Seven, two points ahead of England who they face on October 11.

Traditionally, Ireland have had the upper hand against the Turks having lost just once in eleven meetings. But, Turkey were celebrating after the last clashes as they beat Ireland on away goals in the Euro 2000 play-offs.

The first meeting between the sides in 1966 in the European Championship qualifiers led to an Ireland victory with goals coming from Frank O'Neill and Andy McEvoy. Turkey recorded their only ever victory over Ireland in the away tie in Ankara, and since then, Ireland have completely dominated the games.

In 1974, once more in the European Championship qualifiers, Ireland earned a 1-1 draw in Izmir with Don Givens scoring Ireland's goal, and it was Givens who was the hero in the home tie as he scored all four goals in a 4-0 rout at Dalymount Park.

In 1976, Ireland met Turkey once more in Ankara, this time in a friendly with the game ending 3-3. Frank Stapleton, making his debut for Ireland, opening the scoring after three minutes before Gerry Daly made it 2-0 after 14 minutes. But Turkey then fought back to lead 3-2 with ten minutes remaining before Joe Waters, who like Stapelton was making his debut, grabbed a late equaliser.

Another friendly between the sides at Lansdowne Road took place in 1978 with Ireland coming out on top by four goals to two having raced into a 4-0 lead inside the opening 23 minutes, but it was another 12 years before the sides met again when, on the eve of the 1990 World Cup, Ireland travelled to Izmir for a friendly which ended in a scoreless draw.

But later on that year, the sides met again in the European Championship qualifiers with John Aldridge notching up a hat trick in a 5-0 victory for the Irish. In the away leg, Ireland recorded a 3-1 victory, but it wasn't enough to progress to the final stages as, on the same night, England drew 1-1 with Poland to pip Ireland for a place in the finals.

And then in 1999, the two sides were drawn together in the European Championships play-offs with Turkey progressing on away goals after the first leg at Lansdowne Road ended 1-1 (Robbie Keane scoring Ireland's goal) and the return leg in Bursa finishing scoreless.

one team

one army

one belief

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Derry shine despite Barca barrage

A CAPACITY crowd of 10,000 packed the Brandywell to see the game between Derry and Spanish giants Barcelona and they were not disappointed as Catalan kings played some fantastic football to run out 5-0 winners. Derry too played some great football but against the Ronaldinho & Co., it was always going to be an uphill struggle.

The opening goal arrived after three minutes when Rafael Marquez scored a header from a David Sanchez corner and on 36 minutes, Barcelona made it 2-0 when another Sanchez corner was met by Swedish international Patrik Andersson who headed home.

Peter Hutton missed two good opportunities in the first half and early in the second half, he created a great chance for Gary Beckett with a break down the left, but Beckett failed to find the target from the edge of the area.

Brazilian World Cup ace Ronaldinho entered the fray in the 52nd minute and he nearly scored with a free kick a few minutes after his introduction, but the Catalans' did get a third when Marc Overmars burst down the left before crossing for the unmarked Gerard Lopez to score.

A fourth soon followed when Javier Saviola brilliantly chipped the goalkeeper before Ronaldinho slotted in a fifth after racing clear and rounding the goalkeeper.

Smiles all round

Aston Villa manager, David O'Leary, with Gareth Barry, after receiving the inaugural Dublin Trophy after defeating Shelbourne in the final of the quadrangualr tournament at Tolka Park earlier this month.
Shels had reached the final after a stunning 2-0 defeat of Leeds United.

It's the Mighty Quinn, MBE!

FORMER Republic of Ireland and Sunderland striker Niall Quinn has received an honorary MBE.

The award was made by the Queen in recognition of Quinn's 'outstanding services to international football and his contributions to United Kingdom charities'.

The British Ambassador to Ireland, Stewart Eldon, presented the award in Dublin last Wednesday.

An embassy spokesperson said: 'Niall Quinn's initiative of donating the proceeds from his testimonial match between Sunderland and the Republic of Ireland last year to children's charities led to his idea being adopted by a number of other players.'

In a comment on the player's gesture, Prime Minister Tony Blair said: 'It is absolutely typical of the individual. In circumstances where people in sport often get a lot of bad publicity, this is an example we can hold up to everybody.'

Quinn's honour will make him a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

Quinn started his career at Arsenal in 1983, spending seven years at Highbury before moving to Manchester City in 1990.

The striker's last appearance for his final club, Sunderland, was on October 19, 2002.

He received 91 caps for the Republic of Ireland and won widespread acclaim when he donated the proceeds from his benefit match to charity last season.

He is patron of The Glass Slipper Appeal which raises money for hospitals in the Sunderland area in an effort to help their fight against breast cancer.

He also has a close association with Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children in Crumlin, Dublin.

BULMERS
THE Original IRISH STRIP
BEST OF LUCK TO THE IRISH TEAM IN OUR EURO CAMPAIGN.

Portugal dream draws nearer...

Chris Hughton
campaign diary

IT has been a summer of high profile transfers for many members of Brian Kerr's squad and Ireland assistant coach Chris Hughton believes our national team will benefit from the moves.

Matt Holland, David Connolly, Gary Breen and Damien Duff are among those who have started the new season in a different kit to the one worn last term. But Chris insists the changes are not a concern for Ireland as we look towards our two crucial Euro 2004 qualifiers against Russia and Switzerland.

"If anything, the moves should help some of our lads push their careers on to a new level," he says. "I look at someone like Matt Holland, who has made a return to the Premiership with Charlton. Alan Curbishley made a shrewd buy there and hopefully playing in the top flight each week will help Mattie when it comes to Ireland games. I know he was keen to get back in the top division after a year out with Ipswich

"Then we have Damien Duff. It will be very interesting to see how he handles all the pressure that goes with Chelsea at the moment. They have had a quite incredible summer of spending and the expectations at Stamford Bridge are massive for this season.

"Knowing Damien as I do, he will thrive on the challenge and playing Champions League football each week can only help his development. We all know what a quality performer he already is and I believe he will enjoy life at Chelsea. It's certainly an interesting club to be a part of at the moment, that's for sure."

Despite criticism of the timing of the Australian fixture, coming so close to the start of the English season, Chris insists it is a fixture that will form a vital part of the build-up to the Russia qualifier here next month. "The window is there to play an international this week, so we have to make the most of it," he states

'If we could beat Russia next month, maybe there would be a chance for us to win the group, but Switzerland will still fancy their chances of beating us on home soil in our final game.'

"It's an early stage in the season and a few club managers may not be happy with this fixture, but the reality is that international teams across Europe are playing games tonight or tomorrow. And the fact that we are taking on an excellent Australia side means this will be a very important get together. It gives us the chance to come up with a few ideas ahead of the Russia game and that has to be the focus of our attention."

After victories in our last two qualifiers at the back end of last season, Ireland fans are daring to believe victory in Euro 2004 qualifying Group 10 could be within our grasp, but those at the top are warning against such optimism.

"Since Brian took over, we have five wins and a draw on the record, which is fantastic, but at this point I'd still say Switzerland are favourites to win the group," he adds.

"Put it this way, if we offered a guaranteed second place finish in the group and the play-off place that goes with it, it would be very tough to turn down at this moment in time. When you consider the position we were in a few months back, we should be content to still be in the race to qualify now.

"The last two games were all about results. Performances are important for any team, but at international level, especially in qualifiers, it's all about winning and we did that against Albania and Georgia. If we could beat Russia next month, maybe there would be a chance for us to win the group, but Switzerland will still fancy their chances of beating us on home soil in our final game."

The final chapter of Ireland's fascinating Euro 2004 qualifying campaign will unravel in the next couple of months. To this point, it has been a case of so far so good for Ireland's new management team.

RED HOT BOYS IN GREEN

Forget Beckham, Irish internationals led by Damien Duff have been making headlines of their own during the hectic summer transfer market. Gavan Becton charts the comings and goings.

SPECULATION, rumours, denials, multi-million euro price tags, surprise moves, swoops and deals and we're not talking about an average day at the Tribunals at Dublin Castle!

It's the annual football and media feeding frenzy that bridges the gap between the real action on the pitch and in a summer that saw the 'global event' that was David Beckham's departure from Manchester United to Real Madrid and the arrival of Russian Rockerfeller, Roman Abramovich to cash strapped Chel-ski, it's been a busier, and more dramatic summer than ever.

From an Irish point of view it's been an equally tumultuous period with a high number of Brian Kerr's charges leaving for pastures new.

Most significantly, Abramovich's takeover and open chequebook at Chelsea was the catalyst in securing DAMIEN DUFF'S wizardry with Blackburn Rovers accepting a - €24m figure - the Rathfarnham now being the most expensive Irish player of all time.

"This was probably the biggest decision of my life and I didn't want to rush it," said Duff in mid July when he discussed his move away from Ewood Park.

"It was just a matter of thinking everything through. I had seven great years at Blackburn and there was no big reason to move but in the end I decided a big new challenge was necessary.

"I'm really looking forward to playing for my new club. It looks as though great things are going to happen at Chelsea.

"It just feels right. It is a big, big chance and I can't wait."

After protracted negotiations between Chelsea bosses and Duff under the careful eye of advisor and Bray boss Pat Devlin, the Ballyboden born star put pen to paper in a four year deal. Fiscal rewards aside Duff now gets his deserved opportunity to star in the Champions League.

One of the clubs in the race to secure Duff's signature was Liverpool. Gerard Houllier, in desperate need to sign some big names if Liverpool are to battle for Premiership and European honours may have missed out on Duff but secured the considerable talents of Fulham favourite STEVE FINNAN.

The right-back had looked destined to join Gerard Houllier's side for some time and was the first of a string of summer signings expected at Anfield after their disappointing season.

The Reds Chief Executive Rick Parry said:

"Steve is a very talented player who we were eager to bring to Anfield. We are pleased that he has agreed to join us and look forward to seeing him in action this season."

Finnan, who is understood to have cost £3.5m, is set to replace England international Jamie Carragher in the starting line-up.

Graeme Souness helped get over his disappointment at losing Duffer with the signing of STEVEN REID who was at the heart of Millwall's push for Premiership promotion.

The 22 year-old, a member of the Ireland squad that reached the second round of the World Cup finals, rejected a late bid by Premiership newboys Portsmouth to sign a four-year contract with Blackburn from First Division Millwall.

Souness said Reid's signing along with those of Australian international Brett Emerton and Italian defender Lorenzo Amoruso would make Rovers a stronger unit this season even with the departures of Duff and England international David Dunn.

"I feel we will be stronger than this time last year," he said.

"We've signed Steven and I'm delighted to have him on board."

While Souness said Reid, scorer of two goals in his nine Ireland appearances, was not as unpredictable as Duff nonetheless added that Reid was a more versitile player.

"Steven's a valuable signing for us because he can play on both flanks. He'll give us several different options. He's also a good age in that he's only twenty two. He's not really like Damien Duff, who is more of a trickster."

Tractor Boys captain MATT HOLLAND finally ended his long term love affair with Ipswich and a move to Charlton Athletic in a four year deal worth £750,000.

The fee could rise to £900,000, with three further instalments of £50,000 payable over the next three seasons dependent on Charlton retaining their Premiership status.

The Bury born 29-year-old, who was a key figure in Ireland's 2002 World Cup finals campaign, cost Ipswich £800,000 when he joined them from Bournemouth in 1997.

He made more than 250 appearances for the Portman Road outfit.

"It was a big decision for me to make but I'm twenty nine now and want to be playing Premiership football," Holland said.

"Charlton are a family club, like Ipswich, and I was impressed with what Alan Curbishley had to say about his plans for the future."

Meanwhile Glenn Roeder made a significant move in rebuilding the fortunes of relegated West Ham United with the signing of Wimbledon striker DAVID CONNOLLY for a fee of €400,000. Connolly (25), signed a three-year contract with the club to end months of speculation in his future after it emerged that Wimbledon would be forced to offload him after going into administration.

The striker, who has scored eight goals in 37 appearances for Ireland since making his debut against Portugal in 1996, was one of the hottest properties in the Nationwide League last season after hitting twenty six goals for Wimbledon. He's off to a flying start after scoring on his debut for the Hammers and already had his first row with his manager.

KEVIN KILBANE began his First Division term with Sunderland with a defeat but rumours have been circulating that a possible move across the Pennines to Everton may be on the cards.

Unfortunately not all developments for our Irish internationals have been so positive. NICK COLGAN has a year remaining on his contract at Hibernian, but was told he could leave the Easter Road club at the end of last term in a bid to reduce the wage bill at Hibs.

Colgan, who was promoted to second-choice goalkeeper in the Irish senior squad when Dean Kiely retired, has yet to concede a goal in three substitute appearances for Ireland, although he has yet to play in a competitive international.

Formerly on the books of Chelsea, he has put in more than 120 appearances for Hibs since joining from Bournemouth on a free transfer in 1999, but he now faces an uncertain future. He has since joined Stockport County on loan.

GARY BREEN - released by West Ham after a disappointing season with the London club that saw them relegated despite a 'last gasp battle to survive - has linked up with former international manager Mick McCarthy at Sunderland.

Another player Wearside bound was COLIN HEALY who rejected Celtic's last contract offer in order to secure first team football. At time of writing, Healy's signature was also being sought by Peter Reid at Leeds United.

Meanwhile the Irish link between players and manager at Aston Villa would appear to mean little with STEVE STAUNTON told he can leave the club on a free transfer - the player preferring the opportunity to play first team football as against a squad role. Reports also claim that MARK KINSELLA has been told by boss David O'Leary that he won't figure in his plans this term.

the movers

- Damien Duff
- Steve Finnan
- Steven Reid
- Matt Holland
- David Connolly
- Gary Breen
- Colin Healy

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Premiership movers and shakers up for Oz

Irish players to shake off the distractions of club transfers and focus on our bid to reach the Euro 2004 finals next summer

BRIAN Kerr has largely kept faith with the squad that picked up maximum points from June's Euro 2004 qualifiers with Albania and Georgia for tonight's friendly international with Australia here at Lansdowne Road.

Steve Finnan (Liverpool), Andy O'Brien (Newcastle United) and Clinton Morrison (Birmingham City) - injured at the end of last season - are the only three players included who were absent when Ireland beat Albania 2-1 and Georgia 2-0 in early June.

With the final two Group Ten European Championship qualifiers against Russia at Lansdowne Road and Switzerland in Basel coming up in September and October, the Australia match is vital for Ireland's preparation for the two games that will decide Ireland's Euro 2004 destiny and, although admitting that the timing of the game is not ideal, Kerr believes that it is an important part of the preparations.

"I know it's a bad time for clubs and I respect that," he said. "And I'm also having to pick a squad based on last season's form because there have been no games yet this season.

"But I think it is important to get the players back together and get them back in the international frame of mind ahead of the huge challenges we face in September and October."

Also included in the squad is midfielder Colin Healy who looks to be on the verge of signing for Leeds United, while Gary Breen (Sunderland), Steven Reid (Blackburn Rovers), Damien Duff (Chelsea), David Connolly (West Ham United) as well as Finnan will all join up with the squad for the first time since making moves during the summer

Both Breen and Healy have missed several weeks of pre-season training as they looked for new clubs, though Kerr is unconcerned believing that they will prove their fitness in the coming weeks.

To make way for the return of Finnan, O'Brien and Morrison, Kerr has left out Stephen McPhail (Leeds United) and strikers Alan Lee (Rotherham United) and Glen Crowe (Bohemians), though the manager insisted that all three would be on stand-by and may be called in if there are any withdrawals.

Kerr also had kind words for Sunderland midfielder Jason McAteer who the manager said was not included because of his lack of fitness. "Jason hasn't played that many games in the last season. I think I saw his last game which was against Fulham but he's been struggling with injuries. But Jason is a good player and we all know he's scored some vital goals and he's certainly not out of my plans."

I think it is important to get the players back together and get them back in the international frame of mind ahead of the huge challenge we face in September and October."

Welcome Back: Steve Finnan, Clinton Morrison and Andy O'Brien return after lengthy absences.

SIDELINES

PICTURED: Australia manager, Frank Farina, has [illegible] firmly in his sights.

Aussies arrive at full strength

Australia manager Frank Farina has named a full strength 20-man squad for the clash with the Republic of Ireland.

Fourteen of the squad are based in Britain so they will be familiar to the Irish squad through one of the fourteen. Tim Cahill of Millwall, will definitely not play as he has already played for Australia [illegible]

Born in Australia, Cahill represented Western Samoa at Under 17 level when just fourteen and under FIFA rules was deemed to have declared for the Pacific Island as the game was a competitive match.

However, Cahill, who at one point announced his desire to play for Ireland, appeared to make FIFA to every footballing that at his age, he didn't understand the long-term consequences of his decision to play for Western Samoa and FIFA have now drafted rule changes which are expected to be ratified in October allowing Cahill to re-start his [illegible] career from January 1, 2004.

The remaining members of the Australian squad are all experienced international and many will be familiar to Irish fans. Harry Kewell (Liverpool) and Mark Viduka (Leeds United) are the Socceroos star attractions and, after Australia's 3-1 victory over England in London in February, Brian Kerr's men will know that the game won't be easy as preparations for September's penultimate Euro 2004 qualification clash with Russia begin in earnest.

[illegible] have [illegible] that the Ireland clash was vital in their preparations for the World Cup qualifiers after a series of disappointments in recent years. "It's been pretty tough in recent [illegible] but we have to put that to one side," he says. "We are now focused [illegible] qualifying for Germany and all our matches, including the friendly with Ireland [illegible] are important to us."

[illegible] Australia met at senior level, Ireland have faced Australia at Under 20 level in the 1991 World Youth Championships in Portugal where a Damien Duff inspired performance saw the Irish run out 4-0 victors.

GOALKEEPERS

Shay Given

Position: Goalkeeper
Born: Lifford, Co. Donegal
DOB: 20/04/76
Caps: 62
Goals: -
Club: Newcastle United

Shay has emerged as one of Europe's top keepers following an outstanding World Cup Finals. His sparkling form has continued into this European qualifying campaign
Put in an outstanding performance against Albania last April and helped Newcastle United secure a top three Premiership finish last season
Looking forward to his seventh season with Newcastle, the Lifford-born star started his professional career with Celtic before moving to Blackburn Rovers in 1994 also making his senior Ireland debut against Russia in a Lansdowne Road friendly in March 1996
A lack of first team opportunity at Ewood Park saw Shay spend loan spells at Swindon Town and Sunderland (winning a First Division championship medal with Peter Reid's side in 1995/96) before Kenny Dalglish splashed out Stg£1.5m to bring the out of contract player to St James Park in July 1997

GOALKEEPERS

Nick Colgan

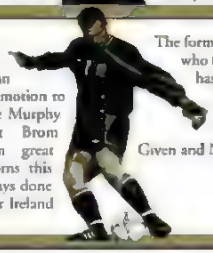
Position: Goalkeeper
Born: Drogheda, Co. Louth
DOB: 19/09/73
Caps: 3
Goals: -
Club: Stockport (on loan)

Promoted to Mick McCarthy's senior squad on a permanent basis following Alan Kelly's retirement from international football after the World Cup finals last June, the Drogheda man was the first choice netminder at Hibernian but at time of writing finds himself out of favour at Easter Road and on loan to Stockport County.
Began his professional career with Chelsea in 1991 after being signed from Drogheda Boys where he was a team mate of Gary Kelly. Made just one first team appearance for the Blues and played only a handful of loan games for Brentford and Reading before his career took off under Alex McLeish at Easter Road following his July 1999 free transfer from Bournemouth where he had spent one season. Made his last appearance as a substitute in the 1-0 victory over Norway in April.

GOALKEEPERS

Joe Murphy

Position: Goalkeeper
Born: Dublin
DOB: 21/09/80
Caps: 0
Goals: -
Club: West Brom



The retirement from international football of Dean Kiely means an earlier than expected promotion to the senior set-up for Joe Murphy. The promising West Brom netminder has shown great attitude at the Hawthorns this season, while he has always done well at Under 21 level for Ireland.
The former Tranmere Rovers player who former boss John Aldridge has tipped to go on to be a great Irish keeper will provide additional cover for fellow keepers Shay Given and Nick Colgan for now.

DEFENDERS

Ian Harte

Position: Left Back
Born: Drogheda, Co Louth
DOB: 31/08/77
Caps: 48
Goals: 6
Club: Leeds United

Another member of the class of '96 to establish himself as a permanent fixture in Mick McCarthy's Ireland teams.
Gifted with a tremendous left foot, the Leeds United star scored four goals as Ireland qualified for the 2002 World Cup finals but then missed a penalty against Spain in the second round match.
Suffered a degree of criticism for his displays in the tournament but looked happier against Russia in Moscow
Missed out on the trip Albania and Georgia for family reasons.
Played with Glebe North and St Kevins Boys as a schoolboy before joining Leeds as a 16 year old in 1993.

DEFENDERS

Stephen Carr

Position: Defender
Born: Dublin
DOB: 29/08/79
Caps: 24
Goals: 0
Club: Tottenham Hotspur

The all-action full-back will be looking forward to a season free of injury with Spurs after missing nearly all of last year's campaign. Returned to international duty for the friendly against Norway and played well in the games Albania and Georgia.
All Spurs and Republic of Ireland fans will cross their fingers and hope those problems are now firmly behind him.
Stephen started to feel problems in his knee in August 2001 and surgery in September and his rehabilitation ruled him out for the rest of the season - including the heartbreak of missing the World Cup
Initially made his debut as a raw 16 year-old in 1993 before finally establishing himself in the side in the 1996-97 season
Named the clubs Player of the Year for 2000 when he won a place in the PFA Premiership Team of the Season. Carr is now recognised as one of the best right-backs in the Premiership and his ability to join in with attacks has added an extra offensive option to Ireland's play

DEFENDERS

Richard Dunne

Position: Defender
Born: Dublin
DOB: 21/03/79
Caps: 17
Goals: 3
Club: Manchester City

Kevin Keegan's faith in Richard Dunne paid dividends with former Under-21 Player of the Year playing an integral part in Manchester City's promotion to the Premier League in 2001. Signed by former manager Joe Royle in the wake of a magnificent World Cup qualifying games against Holland and Portugal in 2001, Dunne thrived in the blue shirt. Since City adapted to life back in the Premiership, both Dunne and the former Maine Road outfit have had their problems. But with the Blues moving to their new City Stadium this season, both player and club will be looking forward to an incident free campaign. Another player off the Home Farm production line, he had to wait until April 26th 2000, before winning his first cap against Greece. Part of a large footballing family that has produced several underage internationals.

DEFENDERS

Kenny Cunningham

Position: Defender
Born: Dublin
DOB: 28/08/71
Caps: 48
Goals: -
Club: Birmingham City

Ireland's current captain turned countless international heads with his elegant and pivotal 70 minutes against Spain in Suwon when coming in for the exhausted Steve Staunton
His display against the Spaniards helped persuade Steve Bruce to spend Stg£1.7m to take Kenny to Birmingham City.
Lost his automatic place in the Ireland back four when picking up groin and hamstring injuries in early 2000 and 2001.
Was installed as captain by Mick McCarthy after Roy Keane's retirement and has justifiably continued that role under Brian Kerr. Now heading steadily for that prestigious half century of international caps
A product of Home Farm and Tolka Rovers, Cunningham joined Millwall as an 18 year-old before moving to the Dons in 1994 for ST£800,000.

DEFENDERS

Gary Breen

Position: Defender
Born: London
DOB: 12/12/71
Caps: 58
Goals: 6
Club: Sunderland

Produced four excellent performances at the World Cup finals where the centre half selflessly adapted to dealing with the threat posed by the German and Spanish attacks
Emphasised his ability to pop up in the other penalty area and find the target by scoring Ireland's crucial second goal in the 3-0 win over Saudi Arabia in Yokohama that secured our passage to the second round
Immediately benefited from his Asian displays by moving to West Ham United in July on a Bosman Free from Coventry City. Alas relegation and a clearout at Upton park leaves Breen with an uncertain summer
Began his career with Charlton Athletic juniors before moving on to Maidstone United, Gillingham, Peterborough United and Birmingham City from whom he joined Coventry for ST£2.4m in February 1997

DEFENDERS

John O'Shea

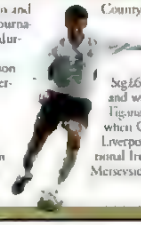
Position: Defender
Born: Waterford
DOB: 30/04/81
Caps: 7
Goals: -
Club: Manchester United

Earmarked as a star of the future by Alex Ferguson after breaking into the Manchester United first team last season
The Waterford-born 21-year old is a natural centre half but can happily operate at right or left full or even midfield if required.
Mick McCarthy handed him his first cap against Croatia in August 2001 and following solid displays against Georgia and Albania in May, he seems destined be an everpresent fixture in Brian Kerr's sides of the future.
Turned in impressive performances on the left side of defence in the absence of Ian Harte during the away qualifiers in Georgia and Albania earlier this summer.

DEFENDERS

Steve Finnan

Position: Defender/Midfield
Born: Limerick
DOB: 20/04/76
Caps: 22
Goals: 1
Club: Liverpool

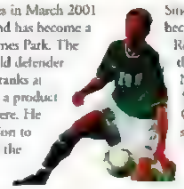


Enjoyed a superb World Cup in Japan and South Korea despite going into the tournament with an ankle injury sustained during the preparations in Saipan.
Knee and ligament problems last season saw him miss a number of recent internationals
Born in Limerick but raised in London, Steve's senior club career began with Welling United from where he joined Birmingham City in the summer of 1995. A move down the Football League to join Notts County helped him establish himself as one of the best young defenders in the English game which persuaded Kevin Keegan to spend Stg£600,000 on him in November 1998 and was a constant presence in Jean Tigana's Fulham side until this summer when Gerard Houllier brought him to Liverpool €5m and thus restore a traditional Irish presence on the red side of Merseyside.

DEFENDERS

Andy O'Brien

Position: Defender
Born: Newcastle
DOB: 29/08/79
Caps: 0
Goals: -
Club: Newcastle United



Signed for the Magpies in March 2001 from Bradford City and has become a firm favourite at St James Park. The highly rated 24 year-old defender came up through the ranks at Valley Parade and was a product of the youth set-up there. He helped secure promotion to the Premier League in the 1998/99 season.
Since signing for Newcastle he has become a regular fixture in Bobby Robsons sides and endeared himself to the Toon Army when he scored on his Newcastle debut against local rivals, Sunderland
O'Brien is desperate to establish himself in the Irish jersey after picking up his first senior cap against Estonia in the 2002 World Cup qualifiers.

MIDFIELDERS

Matt Holland

Position: Midfield
Born: Bury
DOB: 11/04/74
Caps: 38
Goals: 4
Club: Charlton Athletic

Rightly tagged as one of the games' hardest working midfielders, Matt Holland has emerged from the shadows of Roy Keane to forge a new international midfield double-act with Mark Kinsella.
Boasted a remarkable run of unbroken service to the Tractor Boys but a move back to the Premiership with Charlton in a £750,000, four-year deal was completed in the summer.
Made his Ireland debut against Macedonia in the autumn of 1999 and scored that crucial equaliser against Cameroon in Niigata last June.
By his standards, a poor performance in the European qualifiers opener against Russia has been overshadowed by fine displays against Georgia and Albania.

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Republic of Ireland

Manager: Brian Kerr

Newcastle United	Shay Given	Séamas Mac Dhaibéid
Stockport County	Nick Colgan	Nioclás Mac Colgan
West Bromich Albion	Joe Murphy	Seosamh Ó Murchú
Leeds United	Ian Harte	Ian Ó hAirt
Sunderland	Gary Breen	Gearóid Ó Briain
Birmingham City	Kenny Cunningham	Cainneach Ó Cuinneagáin
Manchester City	Richard Dunne	Risteard Ó Doinn
Manchester United	John O'Shea	Seán Ó Sé
Tottenham Hotspur	Stephen Carr	Stiofán Carra
Liverpool	Steve Finnan	Stiofán Ó Fionnáin
Blackburn Rovers	Steven Reid	Stiofán Ó Maoildeirg
Charlton Athletic	Matt Holland	Maitiú Ó hAodáin
Sunderland	Kevin Kilbane	Caoimhín Mac Giolla Bháin
Sunderland	Colin Healy	Coilín Ó hÉalaí
Aston Villa	Mark Kinsella	Marcas Cinsealach
Everton	Lee Carsley	Lee Ó Carsláigh
Sheffield Wednesday	Alan Quinn	Ailéin Ó Coinn
Newcastle United	Andy O'Brien	Aindriú Ó Briain
Tottenham Hotspur	Robbie Keane	Roibeard Ó Cáthláin
Birmingham City	Clinton Morrison	Clinton Mac Muiris
Chelsea	Damien Duff	Damien Ó Duibh
Tottenham Hotspur	Gary Doherty	Gearóid Ó Dochartaigh
West Ham United	David Connolly	Daibhéid Ó Conghaile

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IRISH DAILY STAR

Rep. of Ireland SCORE

The spaces provided are for the final score, scorers and minutes

IRISH DAILY STAR

eircom

Australia

Manager: Frank Farina

John Aloisi	Osasuna
Marco Bresciano	Parma
Scott Chipperfield	Basel
Brett Emerton	Blackburn Rovers
Hayden Foxe	Portsmouth
Vince Grella	Empoli
Zeljko Kalac	Perugia
Harry Kewell	Liverpool
Stan Lazaridis	Birmingham City
Craig Moore	Glasgow Rangers
Kevin Muscat	Glasgow Rangers
Lucas Neill	Blackburn Rovers
Paul Okon	Leeds United
Tony Popovic	Crystal Palace
Mark Schwarzer	Middlesbrough
Josip Skoko	Genclerbirligi
Danny Tiatto	Manchester City
Tony Vidmar	Cardiff City
Mark Viduka	Leeds United

Lansdowne Road, Dublin.
Tuesday, August 19th
k.o. 7.30pm.

The National Anthem

[illegible]

BALLBOYS: Raheny United FC, Dublin North
STADIUM ANNOUNCER: Declan King

IRISH DAILY STAR

Australia SCORE

The spaces provided are for the final score, scorers and minutes

IRISH DAILY STAR

MIDFIELDERS

Lee Carsley

Position: Midfield
Born: Birmingham
DOB: 20/02/74
Caps: 28
Goals: –
Club: Everton

Rejuvenated with Everton under David Moyes, Lee enjoyed a highly productive season at Goodison Park and boosted his international stock in the process. Lee joined the Blues in 2001 from Derby County for Stg£3m. Having been squeezed out of the midfield picture with Ireland in recent years, a sustained run with the Toffees and injuries to Jason McAteer and Steven Reid saw him ably man the right flank in the games against Russia and Georgia where he had chances to open his international goal scoring account.

Made his debut for Ireland against Romania in October 1992 and has amassed more than a quarter century of caps.

MIDFIELDERS

Kevin Kilbane

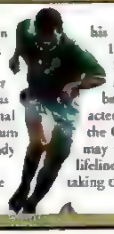
Position: Midfield
Born: Preston
DOB: 01/02/77
Caps: 46
Goals: 4
Club: Sunderland

Has made the left wing berth his own in recent times despite enduring an inconsistent spell at club level.

Having endured mixed fortunes under Peter Reid at Sunderland, Kilbane was reunited with former international manager Mick McCarthy at the Stadium of Light but with the damage already done, the Black Cats were relegated.

The Preston-born 26 year-old made his debut against Iceland (away) in 1997 and joined the Black Cats for Stg£2.5m in December 1999

After a poor game against Albania back in May he showed great character to turn in a fine display against the Georgians four day later. Everton may throw Kilbane a Premier League lifeline after expressing an interest in taking the winger to Goodison.



MIDFIELDERS

Mark Kinsella

Position: Midfield
Born: Dublin
DOB: 12/08/73
Caps: 41
Goals: 0
Club: Aston Villa

A surprise Stg£2m move to Aston Villa from the Valley marked the start of the club campaign for the Dubliner who enjoyed a good World Cup finals in Japan and South Korea.

Having endured a long spell on the sidelines under Graham Taylor at Villa Park, Kinsella will hope that fellow Dubliner and new manager, David O'Leary will see him as part of his plans. The former Colchester United player was one of six players to make their Ireland debut against the Czech Republic in Olomouc in April 1998.

Now aged 30, Brian Kerr will be hoping Mark can follow up on sterling displays against Georgia and Albania and help secure Ireland's qualification for the European Championships in 2004

MIDFIELDERS

Alan Quinn

Position: Midfield
Born: Dublin
DOB: 13/08/78
Caps: 1
Goals: –
Club: Sheffield Wednesday

Alan is a perpetual motion midfielder whose all action style and boundless energy is a real asset. He joined the Owls in 1997 after being spied playing for Cherry Orchard here in Dublin, making his first team debut just four months later

A broken leg sustained in April 2001 failed to curb his development, as Quinn displayed his trademark determination to swiftly bounce back to full fitness

A regular in the 2001/02 campaign, displaying his improved passing skills and a sense of awareness which has resulted from a second full season at senior level. Capped at Youth and U-21 level, Alan can operate as a central of left sided midfielder

Proudly made his international debut in the game against Norway in April.

MIDFIELDERS

Colin Healy

Position: Midfield
Born: Ballincollig, Co. Cork
DOB: 14/3/80
Caps: 8
Goals: 1
Club: Sunderland

Replacing Mark Kinsella for Ireland's game against Georgia in May Colin Healy turned in a powerful performance that may see him command a regular place in the Irish engine room. Much of that promise depends on Colin finding first team football and thus the dilemma of leaving Celtic where his undoubted talent makes him a valuable member of Martin O'Neill's squad. As yet he has been unable to make a permanent breakthrough in the Bhoys midfield

Came within a few minutes of replacing Roy Keane at the World Cup finals, the Cork native put that disappointment behind him when he celebrated his fourth cap against Finland with a stunning goal

At time of going to press, Healy was training with Leeds United, preparing to feature in a reserve game and possibly sign for the Yorkshire outfit.

FORWARD

David Connolly

Position: Forward
Born: Wilmslow
DOB: 6/8/77
Caps: 37
Goals: 8
Club: West Ham United

One of the Republic of Ireland most loyal servants Connolly was bought by Wimbledon in the summer of 2001. Connolly has won 36 caps for Ireland, and had an outstanding season last term, scoring 18 times to finish as the club's leading marksman. Has also played at Division One level with Wolves (loan) and Watford before a highly successful spell in Holland where he scored 48 goals for Excelsior and 7 for Rotterdam. Former boss Terry Burton snatched him from under the noses of AZ Almaar when his contract expired with Feyenoord

Interest during the close season from Premier League new boys Wolves failed to materialise but a move to West Ham has already seen the striker become a hit with the fans after a scoring on his debut.

MIDFIELDERS

Damien Duff

Position: Forward
Born: Ballyfermot, Dublin
DOB: 02/03/79
Caps: 37
Goals: 4
Club: Chelsea

The Rathfarnham-born player made history this summer when he became the most expensive Irish player in history, with his €24m move from Blackburn Rovers to cash rich Chelsea.

In the process Duff - Ireland's player of the World Cup finals - was confirmed as one of the game's most exciting and effective attackers in teh game today

The Chelsea star can change the course of a match with one mazy run and pinpoint delivery

Nurtured at youth level by Brian Kerr, that relationship has now been renewed with the new manager best placed to decide if Damiens future remains in attack or on the flanks where he was superb late on in games during the World Cup finals. Joined Blackburn from Lourdes Celtic in Dublin in March 1996. Duff's contribution will be crucial to the remaining qualifiers against Russia and Switzerland

MIDFIELDERS

Robbie Keane

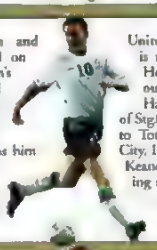
Position: Forward
Born: Tallaght, Dublin
DOB: 08/07/80
Caps: 44
Goals: 10
Club: Tottenham Hotspur

After strikes against Albania and Georgia Robbie Keane is well on course to smash Niall Quinn's Ireland record of 21 international career goals. Robbie's predatory instincts makes him a defender's nightmare while his skill on the ball and cheeky confidence earns him the respect of fans as a real crowd pleaser

Now at his fifth club following his recent transfer from Leeds United to Spurs for Stg£7m, Robbie is now an integral part of Glenn Hoddle's side that narrowly missed out on a European spot this term

Has clocked up total transfer fees of Stg£38m on his travels from Wolves to Tottenham Hotspur via Coventry City, Inter Milan and Leeds United.

Keane could be instrumental in helping secure qualification for Portugal next Summer.



MIDFIELDERS

Steven Reid

Position: Midfield
Born: Hampton
DOB: 10/08/81
Caps: 8
Goals: 2
Club: Blackburn Rovers

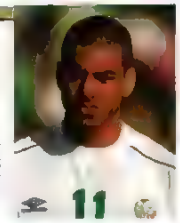
Joined Millwall as a trainee in June 1997 and made his first appearance for the club against Bournemouth in May '98 as a substitute

Contributed a stunning season for the Lions that saw Mark McGhee's side fall just short of promotion to the Premiership

His considerable talents were spotted by Mick McCarthy and after a solid game on the right flank for his first senior appearance in a friendly against Croatia in early 2001 he looks a natural choice for the right side

In recent weeks, this Kingston-born talent has been the subject of much transfer speculation, with Blackburn and Portsmouth leading the chase

Despite missing the games against Georgia and Albania through a knee ligament injury, Stephen will be pressing Brian Kerr for consideration for the upcoming games against Russia and Switzerland



MIDFIELDERS

Gary Doherty

Position: Defender/Forward
Born: Carndonagh, Donegal
DOB: 31/01/80
Caps: 18
Goals: 4
Club: Tottenham Hotspur

A broken leg sustained against Torquay United in September 2001 effectively ended the Donegal man's hopes of playing in the World Cup finals.

But Gary returned this season to reclaim a regular place in Glenn Hoddle's defence and the international squad

Scored his second international goal against Russia in Moscow and followed that up with towering performances against Georgia and Albania and a deserved third international goal and crucial winner in Tbilisi.

Delighted Irish fans and Brian Kerr with a towering performance and goal against Albania as well as the shot that ended up in the net via deflection against Georgia.

FORWARD

Clinton Morrison

Position: Forward
Born: London
DOB: 14/05/79
Caps: 18
Goals: 4
Club: Birmingham City

A real entertainer as well as a hard-working striker, Morrison is already a cult-hero at St Andrews where he has been instrumental in gaining and maintaining Birmingham's Premier League status. He has yet to get a run of starts for Ireland through injury and the former manager's preference to a Keane/Duff pairing up front. With Brian Kerr seemingly reverting to a role on the wing for Duff, Clinton's time may have come.

The London born star did himself plenty of favours after scoring a spectacular volley in the friendly international against Scotland last February Kerr's first game in charge.

He joined the Blues from Crystal Palace in 2001 for STG£3.5m and qualifies to play for Ireland through his Co. Dublin born grandmother

MANAGER

Brian Kerr

Appointed: February 2003
Born: Dublin
Record: P8 W5 D0 L1

A popular Dubliner, Kerr has earned huge respect at all levels of the game following a hugely successful decade at St Patrick's Athletic and then as Ireland Youth Teams Manager and FAI Technical Director.

Assistant Manager: Chris Hughton Football Adviser: Ciaran Murray Team Doctor: Martin Violet

MEET Australia

One to watch
Harry Kewell

Born: 22.09.78
Club: Liverpool

Australia's most celebrated player was at the centre of one of the summer's most controversial transfers and despite interest from Manchester United and Chelsea, he settled on a switch to Anfield. The debate over the details of his £5m move from Elland Road filled the pages of the papers throughout the off season, but the final outcome left Liverpool looking like they had secured the bargain of the year.

A world class forward who is much more than a goal scorer, he is, arguably, one of the greatest players to emerge from Australia. With a brilliant left foot, Kewell is a magician who has the ability to change the course of a game with a touch of the inexpected. Missed much of the pre season programme after picking up an injury.

MARK SCHWARZER (goalkeeper)
Born: 06.10.72 - Club: Middlesbrough
A fine shot stopper who has been first choice for Middlesbrough over the past six seasons, Mark has been a consistent member of a Premiership side that has undergone so many changes. He has never let his country down and will be formidable last line of defence here at Lansdowne Road tonight.

ZELJKO KALAC (goalkeeper)
Born: 16.12.72 - Club: Perugia
Something of a bit part player with Italian side Perugia last season, yet he provides superb back up for Australia's first choice stopper, Mark Schwarzer. Kalac had spells in England with Wolves and Leicester and his importance to Aussie coach Frank Farina should not be underestimated.

LUCAS NEILL (defender)
Born: 09.03.78 - Club: Blackburn Rovers
Made his name in English football playing alongside Ireland midfielder Stephen Reid at Millwall, but when a £1m bid from Blackburn came in last summer, the Lions had to accept the bounty. He has proved himself to be good enough to adapt to the Premiership and is said to have attracted interest from some of England's top clubs.

CRAIG MOORE (defender)
Born: 12.12.75 - Club: Glasgow Rangers
Craig has been sporting the blue of Rangers for the majority of his professional career and has been a big success with the Scottish Premier League champions. He is currently in his second spell at Ibrox and sandwiched a spell in London with Crystal Palace during the 1998/99 season.

TONY POPOVIC (defender)
Born: 04.07.73 - Club: Crystal Palace
A hero of the famous Australian win against England back in February, Popovic scored the first in the triumph at Upton Park. An established member of the Crystal Palace side for the past couple of seasons, he had a spell in Japanese football before settling in London.

STAN LAZARIDIS (defender)
Born: 16.08.72 - Club: Birmingham City
'Skippy' Stan will be desperate to get one over his club colleagues Kenny Cunningham and Clinton Morrison tonight and he is the type of player who always gives total commitment to the cause. A threat breaking down the flanks or from free kicks, he is always a top performer.

TONY VIDMAR (defender)
Born: 15.04.69 - Club: Cardiff City
A former Rangers defender who has recently made a move to join First Division, Cardiff City. An old hand in this Australia side, he has been a regular throughout their recent highs and lows. Spent last season at Middlesbrough, but he was very much a bit part player under the management of Steve McClaren.

KEVIN MUSCAT (defender)
Born: 07.08.73 - Club: Glasgow Rangers
The second Rangers player in this Aussie squad arrives at Lansdowne Road with a fearsome reputation. Muscat has been involved in a few high profile on-pitch battles over the years and is never afraid to put his foot in where it hurts. Previously with Crystal Palace and Wolves.

BRETT EMERTON (midfielder)
Born: 22.02.79 - Club: Blackburn Rovers
A shrewd buy by Blackburn boss Graeme Souness in the summer, Emerton should have enough quality to fill the boots of the departed David Dunne. A star in the Champions League with Feyenoord last season, he is a quality operator in the midfield. Recently named Oceania Footballer of the Year.

PAUL OKON (midfielder)
Born: 05.04.72 - Club: Leeds United
Worked under Terry Venables during his time as Australia coach and El Tel then brought him to Leeds when he took over at Elland Road last season. Made his name at FC Brugge in Belgium and went on to enjoy stints in Italy's Serie A with Lazio and Fiorentina. That was followed by a spell with Middlesbrough.

JOSIP SKOKO (midfielder)
Born: 10.12.75 - Club: Genk
A quiet achiever compared to Australian football's high profile players, Skoko's midfield creativity is an asset to the national team. Exquisite close control and eye of the needle passing makes Skoko the type of player to turn a match with one touch. A class above the rest in the Belgian league with Genk.

DANNY TIATTO (midfielder)
Born: 22.05.73 - Club: Manchester City
A tough tackling midfielder who has proved his worth in the English Premiership with Manchester City, Tiatto is the type of battler any manager would want in his side. One of the more experienced internationals in this Australian squad, he made his debut at this level against Colombia back in February 1995.

MARCO BRESCIANO (midfielder)
Born: 11.02.80 - Club: Parma
The new generation of Aussie internationals are starting to make a breakthrough now and by the time of the 2006 World Cup finals, Bresciano may be a kin pin of this side. Something of a bit part player with Parma in Italy last season, but he has the raw talent to become a real star.

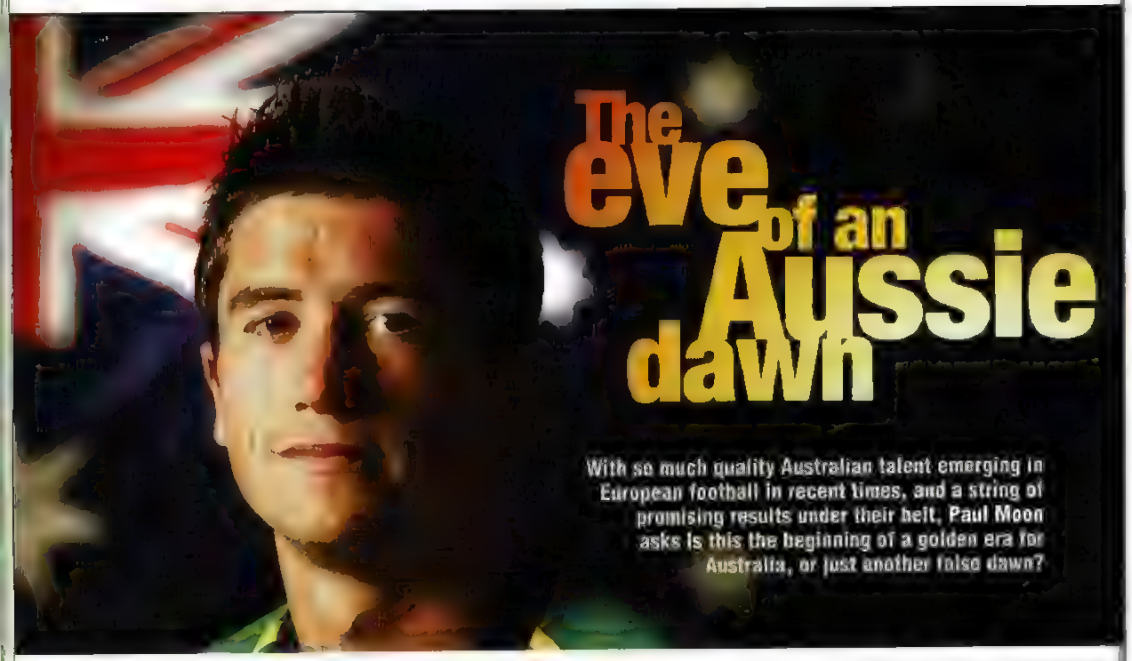
SCOTT CHIPPERFIELD (midfielder)
Born: 30.12.75 - Club: FC Basle
A lightening quick performer who has sparkled in the colours of last season's Champions League surprise guys FC Basle, Chipperfield will be hoping to secure a regular place in the Aussie starting line up ahead of the next World Cup qualifying bid. Has been linked with a move to England of late.

VINCE GRELLA (midfielder)
Born: 05.10.79 - Club: Empoli
The traditional route for Australia's stars making their name in European football has been to head for England, but Grella has been an impressive addition to the highly competitive Italian league. Not the most gifted of performers, but he more than makes up for that with his battling qualities in the midfield.

MILO STERJOVSKI (midfielder/forward)
Born: 27.05.79 - Club: Lille
He has always been tipped as one of the bright young stars to have emerged through the Aussie ranks and the time has now come for Sterjovski to prove his worth. Plying is trade in the French league, he has been used as a wide man whose keen eye for goal makes him a serious threat in the attacking penalty box.

MARK VIDUKA (forward)
Born: 09.10.75 - Club: Leeds United
It has been another summer of speculation surrounding the big hit man who has been targeted by a host of European clubs. Leeds boss Peter Reid has been desperate to hang onto his top forward and it's no wonder. This former Celtic hit-man has scored goal on every step of a glittering career.

JOHN ALOISI (forward)
Born: 05.02.76 - Club: Osasuna
Burst into the limelight after scoring goal aplenty for Portsmouth in the 1997/98 season and his career looked to be on the up and up as he moved into the Premiership with Coventry. A disappointing spell at Highfield Road came to an end in with a £1.2m move to Spanish side Osasuna in the summer of 2001.



The eve of an Aussie dawn

With so much quality Australian talent emerging in European football in recent times, and a string of promising results under their belt, Paul Moon asks is this the beginning of a golden era for Australia, or just another false dawn?

This evening's match marks what the entire Australian soccer fraternity fervently hope will be the beginning of a grand new era for their team.

For, it is the first fixture undertaken by the Socceroos, as they are popularly nicknamed, since multi-millionaire Frank Lowy was appointed chairman of Soccer Australia, the national administrative body, exactly one month ago.

Slovakian-born Holocaust survivor, Lowy's success in business resulted in him becoming Australia's third wealthiest man. He proved himself able to bring his commercial acumen into the football arena when overseeing Sydney City's rise to dominate the domestic scene in the 1970s. City were four times national league champions between 1977 and 1983.

Then, in 1987, Lowy sensationally walked away from soccer, exasperated at what he perceived to be the incompetence surrounding him. Sydney City disbanded soon afterwards.

Numerous attempts were made to lure Lowy back to the fold over the next sixteen years. Each was rejected, until a damning federal government commissioned report on the state of local soccer nominated Lowy as the only individual capable of providing the leadership so desperately needed.

And so, to wide acclaim, Lowy took charge on July 19th - though reluctantly. "I love the game very much and as much as I did not want to take the job on, I could not say no," he said.

Amongst the numerous soccer personalities to applaud his accession was Joe Marston, arguably the finest player the country has produced.

Few people are better equipped to provide an overview of the scene Down Under than

Paul Moon
Oceania Soccer Correspondent

Marston.

Now 77, Marston played in his earliest senior match six decades back, won the initial cap of 37 in 1947 and became the first Australian to make his mark overseas. Gaining English League runners-up and beaten F. A. Cup finalists' medals with Preston North End, he was recently voted the fourth best player to wear the historic Lancashire outfit's white jersey.

Upon returning home, Marston coached successfully at club level and briefly took charge of the national combination.

"I wholeheartedly back Lowy out of frustration of witnessing what has gone on here in my time," Marston says. "I thought the game was going to pick up in the ten years after I came back from England, but it has always been in turmoil. I think the old national association disintegrated four times during my playing career here and it hasn't improved.

"The players weren't the problem, it was the officials. They were always pushing their own barrows and that's why the sport has suffered. We could be up there alongside the big boys if everyone pulled together. Once Lowy gets things moving, soccer might finally get off the ground."

Marston's words give a fair indication of the huge weight of expectation on 72 year-old Lowy's shoulders. High amongst his priorities must be restructuring the national league he helped establish in 1977.

For many seasons the league has stumbled along, amidst declining playing standards, attendances and media interest. Understandably, it has been unable to attract sponsorship. Several clubs have followed Sydney City into oblivion, due to severe financial problems, and all the survivors are losing money. The days when former internationals, such as Ireland's Jim Dunne and Jerry Murphy, could be enticed from Europe to wind down their careers on the opposite side of the globe are merely a memory.

With the domestic game starved of resources, its leading players inevitably look towards greener pastures abroad. The talent drain, which began as a trickle in the mid 1980s, has become a torrent. Over 130 Aussies are now employed as professionals in Europe, Asia and the Americas. As a result, the fare provided by the less gifted staying behind is becoming even less attractive to the fans.

Another handicap bedevilling the league is 'the ethnic factor'. Much of member teams' support comes from the Italian, Greek and Croatian communities and this has given soccer the image of a foreign recreation in the eyes of countless Australians. Thankfully, derogatory terms for soccer like 'wogball' are now rarely heard and seven of the thirteen clubs featuring in today's league carry no ethnic affiliations whatsoever.

Yet, the National Soccer League's gates (averaging under 5,000) are well below its Australian Rules football and Rugby League counterparts. Nobody contradicted David Hill, one of Lowy's predecessors, when he asserted: "The current national league is in its death throes, it's a ruin. You have no choice but to scrap it and begin again."

The league in its present form will indeed be scrapped; the season 2004 - 2005 being pencilled in as the commencement date for a revamped championship. No one knows what shape the new competition will take and Lowy's vision of it is eagerly awaited.

Even more fundamental to Australian soccer's welfare is the moulding of a national selection good enough to qualify for the 2006 World Cup.

Socceroos coach Frank Farina hits the nail on the head by saying: "Soccer has the potential to overtake the other football codes in Australia. But, we have to get to the World Cup before we can even think of that happening. Sponsors would want to get involved, the national league would benefit and so would the grassroots game."

FIFA's recent rescinding of the decision, announced last year, to grant Oceania direct entry to the World Cup finals was a huge body blow. Significantly, prior to being confirmed as Soccer Australia chairman, Lowy arranged a meeting with Sepp Blatter to seek the easiest possible qualifying path for the Socceroos.

Lowy's wish is that Australia (assuming they negotiate the Oceania preliminary stage) face the Asian, CONCACAF and South American teams also gaining what FIFA term "half places" in a round robin tournament on neutral territory, probably European. The top two from this would win finals berths.

Blatter, who described Lowy as 'the most credible person in the southern hemisphere to take the helm at Soccer Australia', has expressed his support for the concept. Whatever route Australia are presented, it is essential they be primed to face it.

Having overcome feeble opposition offered by New Zealand and the Pacific Islands minnows in Oceania, the Australians were ill prepared to meet the challenges that Argentina, Iran and Uruguay provided during their last three World Cup misadventures.

The current Australian national league is in its death throes, it's a ruin. Soccer has the potential to overtake the other football codes in Australia. But, we have to get to the World Cup before we can even think of that happening

Financial constraints have, in the past, prevented Soccer Australia from securing the meaningful friendly encounters essential for the build up to a credible World Cup campaign. However, moves are being made to arrange 'home' games in Europe, where virtually all the Socceroos are based, thus largely eliminating crippling travel costs. The earliest such fixture, versus Jamaica in Reading, is tentatively scheduled for next month.

The quantity and quality of those European domiciled stars provides Australian soccer's principle source of hope.

A highly capable team can surely be built around the likes of Lucas Neill, Brett Emerton, Marco Bresciano, Mark Viduka, Hayden Foxe, Craig Moore and, above all, Harry Kewell, particularly if it is reinforced by renowned Australian grit. And should a couple of exceptional young defenders emerge in the next two years, then Antipodean fans can have every confidence in both reaching Germany 2006 and making waves there.

Further optimism is gleaned through the number of juniors playing, which over-shadows the figures for the rival football codes, and the Australian sporting public's indisputable taste for top drawer soccer.

The World Cup was viewed by the Island Continent's largest television audience in 2002, the English Premiership invariably attracts high ratings and the Socceroos draw capacity crowds to the large stadia of Melbourne and Sydney when their World Cup qualifying bids reach the nitty gritty stage.

Appearances in both the finals of the Confederations Cup and World Under 17 Championship, as well as the Olympics and World Youth Cup semi finals provide a glimpse of Australian soccer's true capabilities. In addition, the scalps of Hungary, Scotland, Croatia, England, Paraguay, Chile, Norway, South Africa and Argentina have been collected in A internationals.

Most of the above achievements transpired to be false dawns. But, should Lowy indeed be the catalyst for Australia to fulfil its undoubted promise, then we will be seeing the dawn of a glittering age tonight.

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UCD retain their title to steer a course towards a glorious treble.

John Fallon
Irish Daily Star

Women's National Cup Final

UCD 2-0 LIFFORD (CLARE)

UCD'S ladies retained their title as Ireland's premier Women's team by beating Lifford from Clare 2-0 in this year's WFAI Cup Final last Sunday week at Richmond Park.

For Lifford, it was their inaugural senior final but judging by the majority of teenagers in their team and their success at juvenile level, they are certain to inhabit the blue ribband final during upcoming years

The Irish Under 19 squad that reached the second phase of the European Championships earlier this year, was populated by players from the club based in Ennis.

Their manager Damien Walsh has groomed the girls, including Marie Curtin and Selina Moylan, through the underage ranks into the senior fold

They produced enough chances to lead at the interval but faded after the break as the champions belied the scorching temperatures to increase their tempo

Irish International striker Carmel Kissane bagged the two goals in the second half of the final that, for the first time in seven seasons, didn't feature the perennial superpowers of ladies soccer, Shamrock Rovers.

The National Finals have brought a variety of emotions for Kissane – a current basketball international. The Kerry native collected a runners-up medal with her home side, Listowel Celtic in 1998 before winning the crown with her new team, Shamrock Rovers, in the next season. Last season, she scored in the final for UCD to help overthrow her former team, Rovers.

The Hoops' empire was laid siege to by UCD in that final, where eventually Rovers lost the the All-Ireland crown they held for the previous six years.

That revolution has subsequently intensified, as the students are poised to collect the treble of trophies that includes the Dublin Womens league title, accompanied by the National and Dublin Cups

Coincidentally, the squad are in Norway this week to represent the Irish by virtue of last season's National cup win, grouped with the champions of France (Juvisy FCF), Poland (KS AZS Wroclaw) and the host nation (Kolbotn IL 1)

Pat Kavanagh's ladies face a tough task to earn top spot for a quarter-finalist slot. Irrespective of how they fare this week, this latest WFAI Cup capture guarantees the UCD squad a berth in next season's European venture

Uppermost in the manager's mind has been the preparation for their maiden journey into the Mecca of club football throughout the continent. All concerned with the group were honoured to receive an invitation from Spanish giants, Athletico Bilbao, to guest at their home ground for a friendly game two weeks ago.

Like the Irish crew, the Spaniards are in Champions League action this week as domestic titleholders and for a quality warm-up game, they invited UCD to travel to Spain.

Said the UCD coach Kavanagh: "It was a great work-out for the team. We lost the game 2-1 but the preparation stood to us in the cup final and should help the girls in the Champions League series

In the National Final, UCD's experience and fitness were decisive in the manner they shut out the opposition. Rosie Power, a former Irish star who has played in the United States up until recently, was steady in midfield and Caroline Thorpe raided down the flanks, particularly in the second period

Kissane applied two great finishes for the goals. Firstly she was on hand to head home the opener on the 47th minute after Sylvia Gee retrieved a corner that wasn't properly cleared and sent the cross back into the six yard area.

The move of the match led to her second on 66 minutes when Gee dissected the defence with a pass, and from just outside the box, she rolled in the shot in off the post

Regularly, Lifford's Mary Ryan had the beating of her marker down the right flank. Her skill and crossing caused problems and a cheeky lob on the hour that sailed just over the bar almost squared the game at 1-1

Irene Hehir's header and Anne Curtin's shot were the quality chances that went by the wayside for Lifford in the first half. On balance though, their opponents created openings that fell to Sharon Horgan and Kissane in the early part of the game but neither breached the goal of Irish Youths International Sue McNamara.

UCD's elevation to the fore of the game in Ireland has originated from the vision of those within the University's executive

Former Dublin GAA star Brian Mullins is Director of the Sports Department on campus and has been influential in the rise and rise of the soccer faculty

After the Cup final, skipper Sylvia Gee praised the support from Mullins: "We are very grateful to Brian and the rest of the people in the UCD Sports Department. They have put a lot of time and effort into the soccer section and we owe them much for that."

LIFFORD: McNamara; O'Donoghue, O'Keefe, Heachy, McCormick; Malone, Moylan, Reynolds, Curtin; Ryan, Hehir.
Subs: Jordan for Reynolds, Purcell for Curtin (both 77 mins), Walsh for O'Keefe (87 mins).
UCD: Spratt; Stapleton, Liston, Lindsay; Kearney, Kelly, Power, Thorpe, Horgan, Kissane, Gee.
Referee: R Daly (Roscommon).

SUCCESS: Ireland winger, Caroline Thorpe played her part in UCD's recent Women's National Cup final success at Richmond Park.

rankings

THE Republic of Ireland have been placed in 38th position from a total [illegible] Women's World Rankings with USA in top place, Norway second and [illegible]

Ireland have had a strong start to the European Championship qualification campaign and remain [illegible] brilliant 6-0 victory at home to Bosnia Herzegovina followed by an away draw in Croatia and a home [illegible]

Friendly results have also been encouraging with victories recorded against Greece and Wales while Ireland's only defeats of the year are away to Portugal and World Number One country, the USA

But in the complicated rankings, it means Ireland have dropped two places since December 2002

However, the rankings won't worry manager Noel King or his players with Ireland's European Championship group rivals being closely grouped with Ireland Romania are the strongest side in the group and are in 34th place while Croatia are behind Ireland in 44th. Bosnia Herzegovina are back in 78th place while Ireland's next opponents, Malta, have yet to receive a ranking having only joined the women's game in the last couple of years

The FIFA womens' rankings are made four times a year, with July's edition being the first of 2003. The next set of rankings are due in August with the rankings being released quarterly from 2004

Longford and Pat's gear up for summer's first showcase

eircom League Cup final to be decided on the night.

THE first silverware of the season will be decided next Monday night when Longford Town take on St Patrick's Athletic in the eircom League Cup final at Richmond Park.

With summer soccer in full swing, the match provides an ideal showcase for the teams currently lying fourth and third respectively in the eircom League Premier Division. It also gives the fans an opportunity to savour their first League Cup final in almost a year and a half

No eircom League Cup competition was held during the 2002-03 season as a result of its truncation to facilitate the advent of Summer Soccer this year. The last eircom League Cup final – for the 2001-02 season – took place in April 2002, when Limerick beat Derry City on penalties after a two-legged final

This year, the winners will be known on the night with a "once-off" final, with extra-time and penalties to decide the tie if necessary. But with the Premier Division's current leading goalscorer, striker Tony Bird in the St Patrick's Athletic line-up, and almost a half-century of league goals notched by both clubs so far this season, the 2003 eircom League Cup winners could well be decided over 90 minutes

For a variety of reasons, the stage is set for a big night for both clubs and the eircom League as a whole, as St Patrick's Athletic club secretary Phil Mooney is only too aware. "An appearance in the eircom League Cup final gives the club a greater profile, especially at a time when it's evident that summer soccer is really striking a chord with the public

"On a wider scale, it's an opportunity to 'up the ante', and market the eircom league as a regular entertainment option to those outside the core soccer community – women, young families and those who've maybe never been to a game before," he says

"It's a great occasion for St Pat's fans and for team manager Eamonn Collins. Sometimes the supporters can have great expectations of the team and it can be difficult for someone to take over the reins after a high-profile manager has left the club. Eamonn has been trying new players along the way in the campaign and reaching the final can be seen as a vindication of his principles to date.

"We've always got an eye on the wider picture of European soccer too. We want to be part of that and see success in the eircom League Cup final as a stepping stone on the way to achieving that goal," says Mooney

Monday night will be St Patrick's Athletic's fourth eircom League Cup final appearance, having won the competition for the only time in the 2000/01 season and finishing runners-up in the 1979/80 and 1992/93 competitions. They reached the quarter-final last time out, losing 3-2 to Bohemians after extra-time.

For Longford Town club secretary Frank Murtagh, this cup final outing has an obvious significance. "Reaching our first League Cup final is a huge achievement for the club. We've defied the sceptics for four successive years by staying in the Premier Division and while it's our second cup final appearance (Longford lost the 2001 FAI Cup final to Bohemians) we've never won any senior competition, so victory on Monday night would mean so much to the fans

"We've had some superb performances on our way to the final – beating Bohemians after extra-time in the quarter-final and getting past Derry City by the skin of our teeth in the semi. As a result, there's a genuine excitement and belief among the supporters that we can take home the trophy, despite being drawn away to one of the best teams in the country," he says

"In Alan Matthews we've got a manager who must be well pleased with the way the season has panned out so far. We finished fifth in his first season in charge at Flancare Park, which was a major achievement given that he came in right at the start with little or no time to prepare the team and we were widely tipped for relegation.

"So far this season, we've played 22 games in all competitions and lost only four Despite limited resources compared to other clubs, Alan [Matthews] has assembled a very talented squad. The way they're playing and their results to date speak for themselves," adds Murtagh.

Longford had previously only reached the quarter-finals in the last two League Cup competitions - and in three of the last four competitions. They went out of the 2001-02 eircom League Cup to Shamrock Rovers, losing 6-1 at home

Murtagh is also aware of the financial benefits that success in Monday night's decider can bring. "The eircom League Cup isn't a competition that many clubs would include in their budget at the start of the season, but it's proved to be quite lucrative for us so far

A cup final appearance is a big boost to any club and none would turn down the opportunity of the accompanying revenue. While some teams may have fielded weakened sides in the earlier stages, there's no danger of that happening in the final. Now that we're there, we want to go the whole way and win it."

> "There's a genuine excitement and belief among the supporters that we can take home the trophy, despite being drawn away to one of the best teams in the country."
> Frank Murtagh, Longford Town Club Secretary

> "An appearance in the eircom League Cup final gives the club a greater profile, especially at a time when it's evident that Summer Soccer is really striking a chord with the public."
> - Phil Mooney, St Patrick's Athletic Club Secretary

The two clubs are looking forward to Monday night and so too is eircom League Chairman Brendan Dillon. "There hasn't been an eircom League Cup Final since April 2002 and there's no doubt but that this year's match is eagerly awaited by all eircom League fans. "We plan to make this a memorable occasion for both sets of fans and look forward to a full house and a great night of footballing entertainment at Richmond Park

As well as all the action the two fired-up sides will generate on the pitch at Inchicore's renowned 'Stadium of Light', there'll be plenty of entertainment guaranteed off the pitch on the night as well. Complimentary face-painting, music and entertainment will be provided outside the ground on Emmet Road from 6pm (the match kicks off at 7.45pm), making it a perfect night out for all the family before the school term starts back again

There'll be more entertainment inside the ground before kick-off and at half-time. Stand tickets cost €12 for adults and €6 for juveniles and OAI's. Ground tickets cost just €10 for adults and €5 for concessions, so there's no excuse not to make your way to Richmond Park next Monday for a great night's footballing entertainment.

The eircom League Cup Final between St Patrick's Athletic and Longford Town takes place at Richmond Park, Inchicore, Dublin 8 on Monday 25th August, kick-off 7.45pm

Tickets are available from both clubs. For information, call the St Patrick's Athletic ticket hotline on 01 4546332 or Longford Town on 043 46955 during office hours.

eircom League boosts squad

Keeper of the Flame

From the magic of Milltown with Rovers to the Theatre of Dreams and United, Pat Dunne has lived every schoolboy's dream.

Patrick Madden

"OVER here, Terry. Long ball out, Barry. Swing it across, Trevor. Now!"

The language of football echoes though the humidity of a July evening as Shamrock Rovers tone up young athletic bones on their training ground at the foothills of the Dublin mountains in Rathfarnham.

Goal keeping coach Pat Dunne stands on the touch line and remembers the time when football, too, was the opium of his youth and when he wore the goalie's jersey for the Hoops.

That was a lifetime ago, but Pat is back with the club where it all began and from where he started out on the road that led to Old Trafford and the Irish international side

The reason for Pat's return is, quite simply, because of the climate of change and optimism which is currently seeping into the core of Irish soccer. The Genesis Report signalled the new aspirations of the F.A.I., and that was good enough to seduce Pat into active service again. Of course, another reason for his return is because of the ambitious qualities being displayed by Hoops manager, Liam Buckley.

Pat Dunne played for Shamrock Rovers back in the gloom-laden, grey old days of the late fifties and early sixties when football was one of the few enjoyments available to youngsters. And, cheap, because all you needed was a pair of boots, a football at your feet and loads of passion in your head

In 1964 Rovers were the best footballing team on the island of Ireland. There were no weak links. Every player a star in his own right. Jackie Mooney of the lethal head. Eddie Bailham of the flashing right foot. The guile and [illegible] Tuohy. The wing speed of Frank O'Neill, the industry and verve of Johnny Fullam, the rock-solid dependability of Ronnie Nolan, Pat Courtney and Tommy Farrell. And behind them, in the last line of defence, the goalie Pat Dunne

Inevitably the talented Dunne aroused the curiosity of the scouts and when Manchester United came knocking on Shamrock Rovers door in the summer of '64 the youngster from Rathmines was quick to say yes to a transfer deal. Rovers received ten thousand pounds for the move and Pat was offered a wage of fifty five pounds a week, plus an opportunity of playing with one of the most exciting team's in the world.

Pat was now a member of a very exclusive family, sharing the same breathing space, the same dressing room, receiving the same applause and enjoying the same banter in the company of a galaxy of world legends

That was almost forty years ago, but when you talk to Pat today you realise that a lot of his heart still belongs in Matt Busby's Theatre of Dreams.

The team that Pat joined was the one that would lift United out of the gloom of the Munich tragedy and into a new, exhilarating stratosphere - culminating in the winning of the greatest prize of all, the European Cup in 1968. It was the team that contained the genius of Denis Law, the thundering right foot of Bobby Charlton, the weapon of mass destruction known as Nobby Stiles and, of course, the awesome presence of George Best.

Contrary to popular belief Matt Busby was not the paternal figure he was so often made out to be

This was the Theatre of Dreams that Dunne was whipped into when Matt Busby promoted him to the first team that would win the 1965 Championship. Indeed from the moment of his arrival the team were to remain unbeaten for a staggering nineteen games. The run finally ended in a fog-blanketed classic with Leeds United at Old Trafford in December of that year.

Aggressive by nature, bad boys by reputation, Leeds held Manchester's forwards and won that night, mainly through the efforts of the wandering Bobby Collins and the nimble, fluent Johnny Giles

That year Pat also made his international debut for Ireland against Spain in a World Cup qualifying tie at Dalymount Park. The Spaniards were cocky and confident and the huge crowd that packed Dalymount Park expected a brave show from Ireland, but certainly not a victory.

It didn't turn out that way. A free kick, in the Beckham style from Frank O'Neill of Shamrock Rovers, floated across and when Noel Cantwell and Charlie Hurley charged into the Spaniards penalty area you could see the terror in goalkeeper Jose Iribar's eyes. This was Pamplona bull-run stuff and the ball ended up in the Spanish net to give Ireland a one-nil win

The return leg in Seville promised another shock when Mick McGrath fired Ireland into the lead but the Spaniards subsequently treated them with utter contempt by ramming home four goals.

In 1967, and just one season before United began their epic journey to the European Cup, Dunne became the forgotten man at Old Trafford when he lost his place to Alex Stepney. He eventually drifted off to Plymouth where he stayed until 1969 when he returned to Shamrock Rovers. He gained four more international caps, but the good days were over. The gentle slide from prominence was beginning. From Rovers he moved on to Thurles Town and then on to Shelbourne. His last port of call was with Bray Wanderers before he finally decided to bid adieu to football in 1981

Although his tenure at Old Trafford gave him just one, glorious Championship winning season, Dunne remembers it with pride, and still stays in touch with the lads for a game of golf, and the trip down the years to debate long departed games, and long forgotten moments.

"Contrary to popular belief Matt Busby was not the paternal figure he was so often made out to be, says Pat.

"Although he didn't apply the 'hair-blower' treatment he had equally tough methods of making you shrink in your football boots

"If his first sentence was: "How do you think you're playing, son?, then you were in trouble

"The likes of George Best or Denis Law or Bobby Charlton had it easier with the Boss, but for myself and the rest of the mere mortals at Old Trafford it was a different story entirely. "

Apart from winning the League medal, are there other memories of life in the Manchester of the mid sixties?

"I suppose teaching George Best how to drive a little Morris is one I often think of. At that stage of his career he was a quiet, modest young fellow. But we all knew our place when little George grew up and became famous

"I shared digs with him for eleven months in a little house in Stretford that was owned by an Irish lady called Mrs Quinlan from Tipperary. We were the only two unmarried players with United at the time so we used to knock around together quite a lot."

And what was Pat's daily routine during those days when the world was young and the horizons were filled with promise?

"Well, Mrs Quinlan would have us out of our beds by eight o'clock and then fill us up with porridge, boiled eggs and plenty of home-made bread

"Then it was off to the club for our 9.45am session at the training ground which was just up the road from Old Trafford. In the afternoons we trained with the apprentices for another couple of hours.

"That was our weekly schedule, and it ended on a happy note once you saw your name pinned to the first team sheet."

Today Pat Dunne is back into the heat of battle with Shamrock Rovers. And, although the prodigal son - aged 60, and seemingly growing younger by the day - may not be minding the net anymore, you can be certain he'll be minding the young man on the goal line.

■ **Patrick Madden is managing Editor of New Century Publishing and Training Ltd.**

NEW

Go on, give it a Splash

7UP Tropical Splash

Irish youngsters gear up for Nations Cup finals

Squad of 16 in Paris next month

THE SFAI has announced the final squad that will represent Ireland in the Danone Nations Cup finals in Paris this September. The squad, which includes players from leagues in Donegal, Limerick, Mayo, Wexford, Dublin and Kildare, was selected following a series of trials which were held around the country earlier this year. John Quinn, formerly of the North Dublin League has been appointed by the SFAI to manage the Irish team. He will be assisted by Steve Coll, who has been involved with schoolboy soccer for over twenty years, and Bobby Smith from Bray Wanderers.

The competition is played by teams of 9 under approved FIFA rules. All players must be between 10-11 years of age. Matches, with the exception of the final, are twenty minutes in duration. In the 2002 competition Argentina finally won out, defeating Holland 1-0 in the final.

Ireland will line up with 31 other nations to contest the international finals of the Danone Nations Cup being held in Paris in September 5th – 8th. The Irish team, which is being sponsored by Danone Actimel, had their first training session together on July 6th, and will have regular training sessions between now and the finals in September.

The idea behind the Danone Nations Cup is to provide a dream for every child to participate in a prestigious international sporting event. While this is the first time for Ireland to send a team to the competition (DNC) it is the fourth year for the competition to be played. The tournament which is FIFA approved involves almost 2,500,000 children, 35,000 schools, 115,000 clubs, and thirty two national federations worldwide.

Among the countries participating in this year's finals are the holders Argentina, Brazil, England, France, Germany, Japan, China, Holland, Portugal, Russia, Mexico, the United States of America, Slovakia and Reunion Island.

Former Irish International Packie Bonner has been named as the official 'Godfather' to the Irish team. Bonner joins an illustrious list of International Godfathers' that includes Michel Ballack (Germany), Alessandro Nesta (Italy), Raf Souza Vieira de Oliveira (Brazil), Ronaldo (Spain) and Zinedine Zidane, who is the overall 'Godfather' for the tournament.

The squad are all getting their first experience of representing their country in an International tournament. "I couldn't believe it when I heard I was selected" said 12 year-old Lee Dixon from Crumlin "to have a chance to represent my country and play against players from other countries is brilliant and I just can't wait."

Superstars like Zinedene Zidane (left) will attend the upcoming Danone Nations Cup Finals in Paris

IRISH SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	COUNTY
Gavin Carlin	Goalkeeper	Donegal
Robert Knight	Striker	Kildare
Lee Dixon	Right Winger	Dublin
Seanan Murphy	Centre Back	Donegal
Ross Kenny	Centre Midfield	Mayo
Dylan Webb	Striker	Mayo
Gavin McArdle	Centre Half	Dublin
Niall Byrne		Dublin
Shaun O'Donnell	Goalkeeper	Donegal
Niall Hanly	Left Full Back	Limerick
Stephen Traynor	Midfield	Dublin
Darragh Settel	Striker	Dublin
Daniel Barker	Left Full Back	Dublin
Paul Murphy	Striker	Wexford
Paul Corry	Centre Midfield	Dublin
Clayton Johnson	Midfield	Dublin

Pictured are the 16 players chosen to represent Ireland in the Danone Nations Cup along with Manager John Quinn, Assistant Manager Steve Coll and Brian Kitson, Brand Manager with Team Sponsor Danone Actimel. Pic Mac Innes

SIDELINES

Cardiff sign Lee

ALAN Lee has landed a £1.2m move from Rotherham to Cardiff. The Welsh club's lack of fire power prompted boss Lennie Lawrence to move for the twice-capped Irish [illegible].

And Lee was expected to make his Bluebirds debut in last Saturday's [illegible] Division home clash with Bradford City.

The Gunner been between [illegible] Lawrence in the previous week's draw between the clubs at Millmoor and it was the player himself who believed his future was best served with a move to Cardiff.

Lee's move is a boost for the former Villa, Port Vale and Burnley attacker who has long term ambitions of holding down a place in Brian [illegible] [illegible] squad.

Irish referees picked for European action

A NUMBER of Irish referees have received prestigious appointments for UEFA Cup and European Under 21 Championship qualifiers in the coming month.

Irish referees have been awarded two European Under 21 Championship clashes in early September with Hugh Byrne officiating Italy's encounter with Wales while Paul McKeon will take charge of Bosnia's clash with Norway.

Byrne will be accompanied to Italy by assistant referees, Eddie Foley and Dave Wogan, and fourth official Ian Stokes, while Paul McKeon will be accompanied by Martin Molony, JP Kelly and Dave McKeon.

Before then, Cork official Alan Kelly will referee an Under 21 friendly in Sweden in mid-August meaning that three Irish officials will take charge of Under 21 games in the coming [illegible].

Redknapp takes Harte?

PORTSMOUTH boss, Harry Redknapp, is considering making a move for [illegible] Ireland international Ian Harte.

The Leeds defender's starring [illegible] Ireland Road Ireland under [illegible] found to turn [illegible] friendly [illegible].

And Redknapp [illegible] for the injured Matthew [illegible] [illegible] the vacant [illegible].

[illegible] Ian Harte [illegible] [illegible] anything is going to happen [illegible].

School's IN for Summer

7Up soccer camps attract over 15,000 kids, writes Derek O'Neill.

The FAI / 7UP Summer Soccer Schools has proved to be a huge hit with kids around the Country.

The schools have enjoyed their finest ever year with 15,000 young players having experienced the fantastic week of full time soccer coaching.

It was a week which gave them a taste of a full time football life normally the preserve of their idols such as Damien Duff, John O'Shea and Shay Given.

There's no doubt that some of the kids on this year's 7UP Summer Soccer Schools will pull on the green of Ireland in future years. And there was no better place for their first introduction to soccer coaching than the 7UP schools.

All coaches employed on the schools completed FAI coaching courses with many of them having attained qualifications at advanced levels.

There have been a number of high profile National league players and senior women's international players who have all made invaluable contributions to shaping the ambitions and attitudes of the next generation of players. And more importantly, the good humoured nature of the coaches and the fun atmosphere created on the camps always ensured the children went away with a smile on their faces!

The FAI even employed a football juggling specialist to enhance the course programme. Sean Darcy, who hails from Liverpool, is of Irish parentage and who is an Australian citizen visited as many camps as possible during the summer to show off his dazzling array of ball skills. Those children who have not witnessed Sean's skills first hand were not forgotten when it came to teaching them advanced ball skills. The FAI put a considerable investment into a soccer superskills CD Rom which teaches children the trademark tricks of their world class idols in easy to learn steps. The CD Rom was presented to every child who attended the camps and was hugely popular with many children practising their new found skills in the unpressurised atmosphere of the 7UP camps.

Brian Kerr, has always taken a great interest in the FAI grassroots programmes such as the summer camps. Brian has traditionally put aside time each year to visit the host clubs and children participating on the camps. Even with his busy workload as Irish senior boss, he wasn't going to miss out this year!

Brian and Irish goalkeeping legend, Packie Bonner, who now holds the position of FAI Technical director, spent two weeks travelling around Ireland visiting as many 7UP soccer schools as was physically possible in the time. The two men saw enough evidence that indicated the future development of Irish youngsters was in good hands.

Both Brian and Packie paid particular tribute to the parents, the club volunteers and the ever increasing number of qualified club coaches who give their valuable time all year round to the development of young players in their respective areas.

By the end of August, the 7UP programme will have completed 150 courses countrywide. There is an ever increasing number of clubs applying to host the camps. All clubs are always welcome to apply. And with the ongoing co-operation between clubs countrywide and the FAI, the 7UP camps will only go from strength to strength.

And of course, that is all good news for the future of Irish football!

Derek O'Neill is a National Development Officer with the FAI.

UPCOMING FIXTURES

AUGUST 2003

19th August, Poland
Poland v Ireland
Friendly

20th August
Ireland v Austria
Road
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29th August, Dub
Ireland Under
Friendly

SEPTEMBER 2003

5th September, Venue
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European Qualifier

OCTOBER 2003

10th October, Swit
Switzerland
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Qualifier

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22nd October
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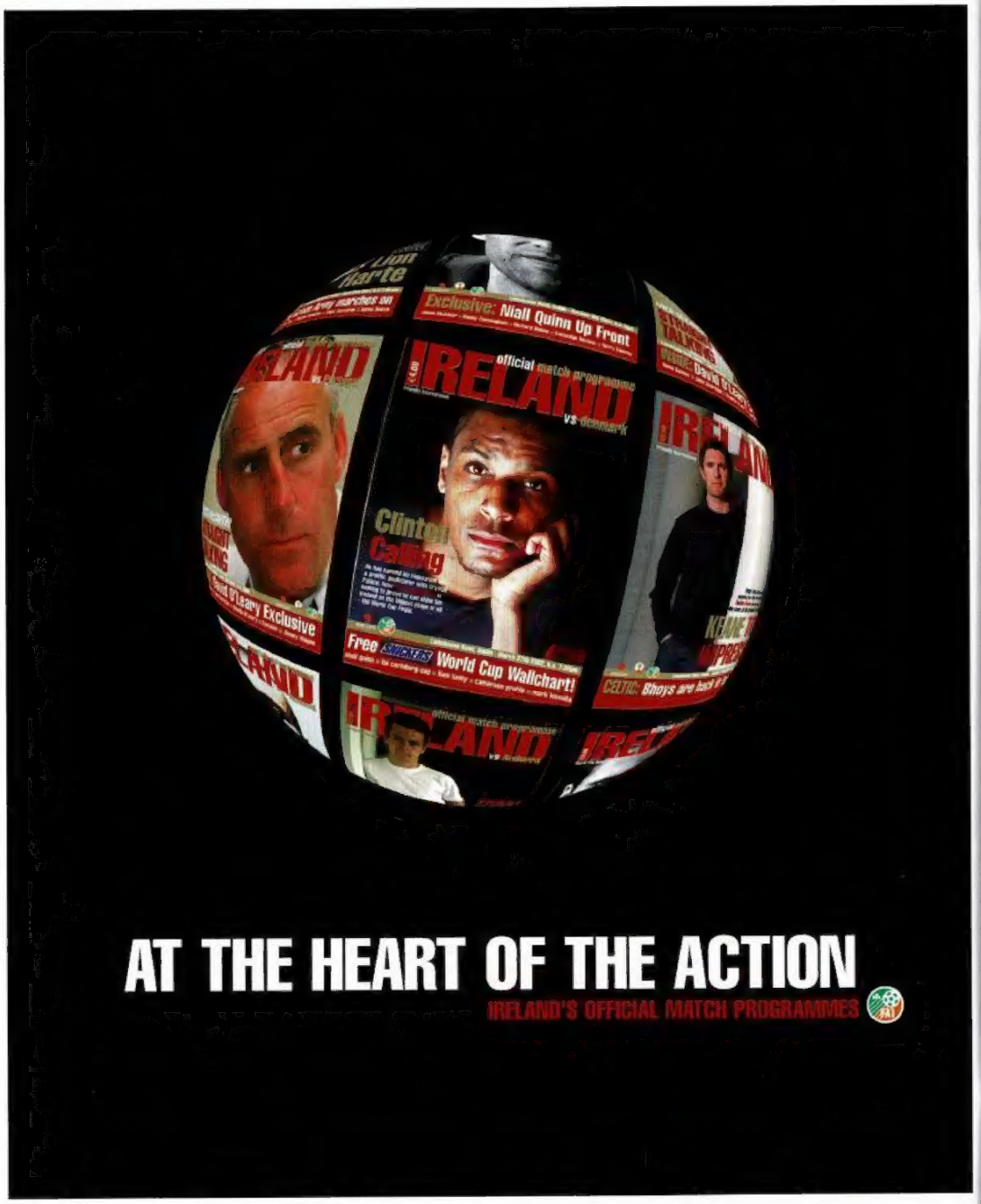
European Qualifier

NOVEMBER 2003

27th November - 10th Decem
UAE
Youth World Cup



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Breaking through the barriers

Irish clubs will need the graft, determination and endeavour shown by Bohemians if they are to make a true impact in Europe.

Brendan McKenna
FAI Media Officer

CAST your mind ck a few years, if you can, to Malaysia 1997. Collie Hawkins was a big man then. Six foot plus but he was also young. Young enough to qualify to play in the World Youth Championship finals.

Brian Kerr was manager of the Irish team on that occasion. And Noel O'Reilly was his 'next of kin'. In 1997 Kerr, O'Reilly and his team were unbeaten until they reached the semi-finals of the World Championships when Argentina, the eventual winners, proved just too good for them. But they compensated by beating Ghana and brought home the bronze medals for finishing in third place following a 2 – 1 victory over the team that, in fact, had beaten them by the same score at the qualifying stages of those same championships.

It was sweet revenge – and how Kerr, O'Reilly and the Irish team loved it.

Collie Hawkins was a part of that success. He was with Coventry City at the time and he was playing in the centre of Kerr's defence.

Hawkins is still around, though he is with Bohemians now, back home playing in his domestic league instead of pursuing his career in the English game. Coventry's loss was Bohemians' gain. Colin Hawkins was a tall man in 1997 – in 2003 he is assuming giant proportions as he shores up the centre of the Bohemians defence.

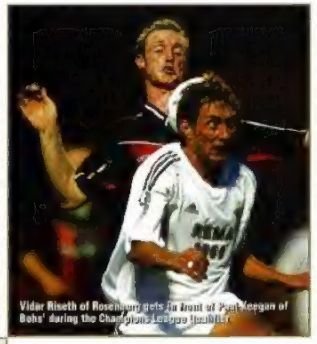
Colin was immense in the heart of the Bohemians defence during their Champions League matches against BATE of Lithuania and Rosenborg of Norway, and it was certainly through no fault of his that the Dublin club conceded the goals which put them out of the competition.

SOLID: Collie Hawkins has been a tower of strength for Bohemians

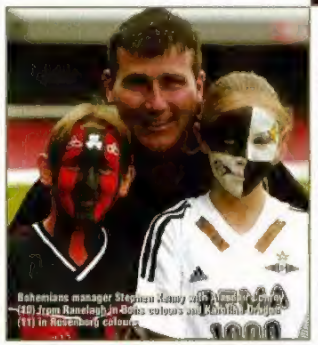
Such is football and since then events have occurred which just go to prove how fickle and unpredictable sport it can be. Another member of that Irish squad in Malaysia six years ago was Damien Duff. He was with Blackburn Rovers at the time and he was the one Irish player who, quite simply, teased and tormented defenders and had them running in all directions trying to keep up with his twists and his turns and the sheer brilliance of his talents.

It was Duff's 'Golden goal' winner against Morocco which put Ireland through to the last eight in the competition. It was the first time such a method had been used by FIFA to decide a championship game. So young Damien Duff – a relatively unknown, shy, quiet under-age Irish lad at the time - had made history.

How times have changed. Compare Colin Hawkins and Damien Duff now. Both were in the same Republic of Ireland team in 1997. Both of them won bronze medals for the same reason. Both were hailed as heroes at the time and when they came home after the finals with the rest of the Irish squad.



Vidar Riseth of Rosenborg gets in front of Pete Keegan of Bohs' during the Champions League qualifier



Bohemians manager Stephen Kenny with Alan Byrne (10) from Ranelagh in Bohs colours and Jonathan Quigley (11) in Rosenborg colours

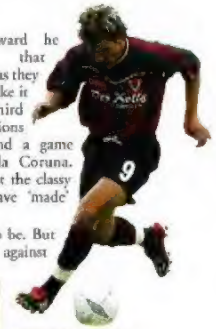
But just look at how their footballing lives have taken different turns since then. Those last six years have been such a revealing - and almost what you might term a revolutionary - time in the careers of both players.

Damien Duff has grown into a mighty footballer as his career has taken him to the money laden cavern of wealth at Chelsea and has made him a football millionaire in a matter of weeks as the Russian-back Chelsea club paid a fee of seventeen million pounds sterling to entice him away from Blackburn.

Colin Hawkins, on the other hand, has come home and is now playing in the more menial realms of the eircom League. But Bohemians are not complaining. They recognise they have a gem of their own, having taken him from St. Patrick's Athletic a couple of years ago.

It was such a pity that his performances did not reap the reward he deserved and that Bohemians deserved as they tried their best to make it through to the third round of the Champions League qualifiers and a game against Deportiva la Coruna. Surely a game against the classy Spaniards would have 'made' Bohs' season.

Sadly it was not to be. But once again the result against Rosenborg just goes to show there is still a gap between the best the Irish can put out and what they are likely to face in these European competitions.



TALENT: Robbie Doyle has shone for Stephen Kenny's side

This is a new level of the ball game for Irish clubs and for Irish players. Having seen so much of the disappointment that goes with elimination from these Euro competitions at the first or second hurdle its clear it takes an immense step up from the level they are used to here at home for Irish clubs to make an impact at full European level.

This year there were hopes that because of the change of season from winter to summer those hopes might be realised with some success.

Perhaps it is true to say the gap is closing. Perhaps the day is not too far away when we can see an Irish club reaching the group stages of the Champions League or of going a few rounds in the UEFA Cup.

The likes of Colin Hawkins, Thomas Heary, Kevin Hunt, Bobby Ryan, Robbie Doyle are worthy of such a place in the European sun. They work hard at their game, they put a lot into those games against BATE and Rosenborg, but it is only by a continuation of that hard work, graft and endeavour aligned to further improvement in their own game that they will ultimately succeed.

I wish them well in their efforts for the future – along with those of our other teams in Europe this season, Shelbourne and Derry City in the UEFA Cup and Shamrock Rovers in the Inter-Toto Cup – but apart from the keenness and the determination they showed, the learning process and the knowledge of how to match these stronger teams of Europe must continue if they are to succeed in the end.

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EURO 2004 TABLES AND FIXTURES AT A GLANCE

Group 1	Pld	Pts
France	5	15
Slovenia	5	10
Israel	5	8
Cyprus	6	7
Malta	7	0

Group 2	Pld	Pts
Denmark	6	13
Norway	6	11
Romania	6	10
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5	6
Luxembourg	4	0

Group 3	Pld	Pts
Czech Republic	5	13
Netherlands	5	13
Austria	6	9
Belarus	6	3
Moldova	6	3

Group 4	Pld	Pts
Sweden	5	11
Hungary	6	11
Latvia	5	10
Poland	5	7
San Marino	7	0

Group 5	Pld	Pts
Germany	5	11
Iceland	5	9
Scotland	5	8
Lithuania	6	7
Faroe Islands	5	1

Group 6	Pld	Pts
Greece	6	12
Spain	6	11
Ukraine	6	9
Armenia	5	4
Northern Ireland	5	2

Group 7	Pld	Pts
Turkey	6	15
England	5	13
Slovakia	6	6
F.Y.R. Macedonia	6	5
Liechtenstein	5	1

Group 8	Pld	Pts
Bulgaria	5	11
Croatia	5	10
Belgium	6	10
Estonia	6	8
Andorra	6	0

Group 9	Pld	Pts
Wales	4	12
Italy	5	10
Finland	6	6
Serbia-Montenegro	5	5
Azerbaijan	6	4

news

Ireland slip one place in world rankings

THE Republic of Ireland have dropped one place to 15th in the latest FIFA World Rankings after an inactive month at international level.

While the Ireland team and many other teams were taking a break in preparation for crucial games in the Autumn, several teams were involved in the Confederations Cup in France with Cameroon climbing four places to jump over Ireland into 12th place.

Traditionally, Ireland drop in the rankings during July as normally, there is no football being played in Europe, though the news of the drop will hardly worry Brian Kerr as he continues preparations for the crucial Group Ten European Championship qualifiers against Russia at Lansdowne Road on September 6 and Switzerland on October 11 in Basel.

Tonight's friendly against Australia will also be followed by a clash with Turkey on September 9 at Lansdowne Road, just three days after the Russia match.

All four games are sure to be difficult with Australia currently in 63rd place, having dropped a massive 13 places in the last month because of their inactivity while Russia are ranked 32nd, Switzerland 40th and Turkey above Ireland in seventh place.

Meanwhile, neighbours England are 10th, Wales are 52nd, Scotland joint 60th and Northern Ireland are 110th.

Group 10

Teams	Pld	W	D	L	GS	GA	Pts
Switzerland	6	3	3	0	12	7	12
Rep of Ireland	6	3	1	2	9	8	10
Russia	5	2	1	2	7	8	7
Albania	6	1	2	3	6	8	5
Georgia	5	1	1	2	3	6	4

Pld: Matches played W: Won D:Drawn L: Lost
GS: Goals for GA: Goals against Pts: Points

Russia	4 - 2	Republic of Ireland
Switzerland	4 - 1	Georgia
Albania	1 - 1	Switzerland
Russia	4 - 1	Albania
Republic of Ireland	1 - 2	Switzerland
Albania	3 - 1	Russia
Georgia	1 - 2	Republic of Ireland
Albania	0 - 0	Republic of Ireland
Georgia	0 - 0	Switzerland
Georgia	1 - 0	Russia
Republic of Ireland	2 - 1	Albania
Switzerland	2 - 2	Russia
Republic of Ireland	2 - 0	Georgia
Switzerland	3 - 2	Albania
Republic of Ireland	06/09/03	Russia
Georgia	06/09/03	Albania
Russia	10/09/03	Switzerland
Albania	10/09/03	Georgia
Russia	11/10/03	Georgia
Switzerland	11/10/03	Republic of Ireland

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